TELOS

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Articles:

John Tate: The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment

Dick Pels: Fascism and the Primacy of the Political

Alain de Benoist: Hayek: A Critique

Nancy Jachec: Adorno, Greenberg and Modernist Politics

Claude Karnoouh: Interculturalism and Multiculturalism

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Nino Langiulli: On Dick Pels' "Strange Standpoints"

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Reviews

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Attention

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Introduction

The thesis concerning the totalitarian character of the Enlightenment was originally articulated, if only briefly, during the heyday of the California exile of the Institute for Social Research, then suddenly dropped. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was never completed and it was around that time, the mid-1940s, that Critical Theory went into its notorious theoretical hibernation. As Nancy Jachec shows in "Adorno, Greenberg and Modernist Politics," the next two decades were wasted on forays into aesthetics, psychoanalysis and opportunistic liberal apologetics such as *The Authoritarian Personality* — nothing radically different from what run-of-the-mill liberal ideologues such as Clement Greenberg were also doing. When Critical Theory resurfaced in the 1960s, it was too late and its old members were unwilling to pick up where they had left off. Instead of inquiring into how particularity and otherness are originally constituted, developed and modified — a precondition for figuring out how to preserve it — Critical Theory succumbed to the logic of passive consumerism and simply set out to locate whatever particularity may still have been left. Having never become integrated into American society, thus remaining outside of its traditions and history, the only particularity and otherness it could locate then was either in the Third World or in the genes — two unlikely places deduced from sensational newspaper headlines or from earlier detours into psychoanalysis. It was right, however, in being suspicious of the New Left and not taking students all that seriously. Those "new social movements" were far too heterogeneous, inextricably tied to the immediacy of the moment and the predominant ideology and, therefore, unable to generate anything more than artificial negativity. At any rate, still legitimated by the "totalitarian threat of communism," liberalism was not really in much of a crisis. Thus the fading of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s also meant the dissolution of the New Left into more fashionable forms of artificial negativity: feminism, black nationalism, and eventually the rise of what had hitherto been marginalized as "sexual deviants" — ideologies of upwardly mobile wannabe New Class members.

Only with the collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War did liberalism once again run into a new wave of challenges — from multiculturalism and postmodernism. But even then the critique remained entirely within the ideological orbit of the predominant liberalism. As Claude Karnoouh indicates in "Logos without Ethos," multiculturalism is not only parasitic on the system it allegedly

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challenges but also helps stabilize it by deflecting attention from real problems, such as increasing economic inequality and spiritual disintegration. By translating all differences into the defining characteristics of social fragments ultimately homogenized by the system into an increasingly atomized populace, multiculturalism contributes to, rather than challenges, the further erosion of those traditions and customs constitutive of real particularity.

Worse yet, the inglorious demise of the bureaucratic centralism of the communist bloc has been read as the vindication of the correctness of a self-congratulatory libertarianism denying the legitimacy of all institutional forms not immediately reducible to contractual arrangements. As Alain de Benoist points out in his critique of Friedrich A. Hayek, such a social philosophy is the culmination of that Enlightenment ideology recognizing only abstract individuality and bent on obliterating all particularity and otherness as alleged social pathologies. Its rationalism dissolves all cultural forms, leaving only the culturally-naked individual subject of libertarianism — the ever calculating and maximizing *homo oeconomicus* — free to enjoy a life whose meaning becomes increasingly elusive. Here the maximization of wealth corresponds to an ever greater spiritual impoverishment and nihilism. Thus the dialectic of Enlightenment comes full circle: the acme of rationalism is at the same time the zenith of irrationalism.

The libertarian reduction of all politics to economics is only the most extreme manifestation of the systematic depoliticization projected by liberalism but pervading Left thinking as well. As Dick Pels argues in his article, "Fascism and the Primacy of the Political," it is precisely this characteristic that historically distinguished the Left from the Right: the first allegedly dealing with "property theory," the second with "power theory." This is why he proposes to re-examine right-wing thought between the two world wars — especially "the Conservative Revolution," which sought to vindicate "the political" understood as a particular society's values and organizational principles, i.e., what gives a society its very identity. While his excursion into an area which has been ignored or demonized since the defeat of fascism and Nazism over half a century ago tends to oversimplify most of the various personalities and positions he collapses under the rubric "the Conservative Revolution," he convincingly shows how it did constitute a reaction to the dialectic of Enlightenment and, as Stefan Breuer concludes in his book on the subject, it "was anything but conservative." It is superfluous here to quibble with Pels over the extent to which the Conservative Revolution can even be regarded, as he unconvincingly claims, a movement at all.[1] What is more important is that, because of the tragic history of the 20th century, the vindication

1. Only by looking at "the Conservative Revolution" from a distance can Pels question Stefan Breuer's rejection of the characterization of its alleged members as sharing much in common in *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993). Thus Schmitt, for one, not only was not a member of the "Conservative Revolution," but he was never a socialist or a revolutionary in any sense.

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of the primacy of the political became associated with fascism and Nazism, with the result that all challenges to the predominant Enlightenment ideology ended up delegitimated as tendentially totalitarian, thus systematically occluding the political domination of the New Class in all allegedly depoliticized Western societies.

Despite his obvious distaste for "the primacy of the political," which he still reads as a right-wing ploy, Pels shows how, *nolens volens*, the Left is finally becoming interested in the political. Yet he cannot resist the temptation to demonize this move by associating it, in the closing pages, with "Eco-fascism" and other authoritarian-dictatorial tendencies, without providing any evidence or arguments whatsoever of any necessary connection between "the primacy of the political" and its alleged crypto-totalitarian implications. The rediscovery of the political by ex-Leftists who no longer believe there is any significant difference between Left and Right may have to do with a much broader phenomenon: the increasing delegitimation of Enlightenment ideology and the end of modernity. If the only rationality is "instrumental" and anything substantive is a function of extraneous social idiosyncrasies, then the mythology that economic scarcity and social inequality are the only remaining obstacles to the achievement of an ideal society will have to be given up — along with the modernist ideology which originally generated it. If there is no universally-valid transcendental rationality unfolding in history, if this teleological myth was always part of the particular theological baggage Enlightenment ideology carried along while rationalizing away all particularity and otherness, then it may be necessary to begin re-thinking the history of this century. Thus Critical Theory can finally end its hibernation and begin to come to terms with those painful implications it refused to articulate as the proper conclusion of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: the realization that even genocidal societies such as Nazi Germany, which from a Judeo-Christian perspective can only appear as terminally barbaric, can be as "rational" as any other, and that its destruction can only be mandated by arbitrary decisions rather than any transcendental law warranting the enforcement of things such as "human rights."

Here is where recent philosophical discussions, systematically reconstructed in John W. Tate's "The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment," may help clarify a predicament that political science, still shell-shocked by the experience of Nazism and communism, cannot yet confront. The hermeneutic critique of the Enlightenment vindicates the primacy of the political and indicates the real cultural presuppositions of the present predicament — one in which all myths have allegedly been exposed as pathologies, superstitions or illusions, but where no society can do without the mythological cultural presuppositions embedded in its traditions and customs. In reconstructing Hans-Georg Gadamer's, Richard Rorty's, Charles Taylor's and especially Alasdair MacIntyre's lethal critique of Enlightenment ideology, Tate also confronts the problems generated by the irreducibly pluralist and axiologically heterogeneous perspectives they prefigure. Although in his search for evaluative criteria independent of any particular

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traditions or for water-tight mechanisms guaranteeing reconciliation between incommensurable frameworks, Tate betrays a residual Enlightenment mind-set, his reconstruction exposes the untenability of any allegedly universalist perspective pretending to checkmate all others as partial or inadequate. Such universality is beyond terminally one-sided human capacities and can be achieved only as an empirical fact, i.e., if everyone does in fact happen to agree. Thus even one dissident can sink claims to universality.

The culturally and, therefore, politically heterogeneous predicament that results need not entail a political Tower of Babel threatening to deteriorate into a *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Similarly, it is unclear why Tate assumes that all conflicts should be resolved theoretically by philosophers, or that cultures are air-tight formal systems. After all, as closed as a traditional cultural framework may be, it is never a purely formal construct inaccessible to anyone who has not already internalized it. While one's past invariably conditions perception and evaluation, it is not the case that "the limits on one's language are the limits of one's world." If the world were not somehow given "as it really is," it would be impossible to trap it within particular traditional frameworks. At any rate, it is not always a matter of merely reconciling conflicting incommensurable traditions, but often of choosing and deciding and, when all is said and done, there may still be disagreements resolvable only in terms of power relations. Conflict is an inextricable part of Being; it cannot be talked out of existence or concealed by branding opponents (often the losing side) as pathological, uninformed or evil. Even as a mere horizon, the rationalism of modernity not only distorts reality but automatically privileges the *given* and the *present* over everything else.

What ultimately delegitimates modernity as self-referential, parasitic on unacknowledged traditional roots and self-defeating (in that it systematically undermines the conditions for its own perpetuation) is not just the return of the political or the decline of Enlightenment ideology but the realization — a few millennia after Prometheus — of the limitations of systems of knowledge. If the whole is the true (or, as Adorno claimed, the untrue, when anyone less than God claims to apprehend it), it is beyond human reach and all systems of knowledge are necessarily one-sided. As Tates shows, what determines these structures, in addition to pragmatic considerations equally applicable to all and therefore irrelevant in determining the "correct" one, are those fundamental, irreducible assumptions defining particular cultures. Where do these fundamental assumptions come from? In *The Crisis of the European Sciences*, Husserl traces Western rationality to a couple of Greeks suddenly deciding to structure life rationally on the basis of *theoria*, while *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ultimately finds them to be equally mythological.

While these mythological roots are utterly contingent, as Catherine Pickstock argues both in her new book, *After Writing* (reviewed in this issue by Robert Sokolowski) and in her review of John D. Caputo's work on Derrida's theological reflections, they are a function of a liturgy that is the "consummation"

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of philosophy. For it is in liturgy — the attempt to apprehend the whole as God — that humanity first realizes itself as human precisely because it fails. The failure, however, is not for naught, since in precipitating the realization of human limitations it also helps constitute the community as a religious compact defining itself through the mythological narrative it traces. The cultural frameworks subsequently constructed upon this narrative are precisely those modernity systematically marginalizes. Pretending to have achieved the equivalent of that universal knowledge whose unachievability originally led to the development of the hidden cultural framework generating it, modernity tends to self-destruct in the process of rejecting and annihilating its own mythological foundations. Ironically, in Pickstock's work the critique of postmodernity leads right back to its liturgical origins and suggests a conclusion of the dialectic of Enlightenment prefiguring neither a hopeless relativism nor a dogmatic subsumption of all particular cultures within the hegemonic reach of the strongest among them.

Cultural pluralism results in nihilism only if modernist premises are uncritically accepted. In a social context reduced to all-pervasive systems confronting hopelessly isolated and therefore abstract individuals, there is a strong temptation to appeal to transcendental norms whose internalized theological foundations make it appear as "obvious." This is the kind of strategy successfully deployed by liberalism in delegitimating "totalitarian" systems and recycled in Eastern Europe by dissident intellectuals in the attempt to negotiate a more tolerant social contract with communist authorities. While certainly praiseworthy and deserving support, such a strategy only managed to translate into very powerful Cold War propaganda delegitimating communist regimes without, however, resulting in any loosening of the repressive yoke in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union. The launching of Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, Solidarity in Poland, and similar movements throughout that part of the world resulted only in intensified repression. Later on, *glasnost* and *perestroika* were precipitated not by a belated acknowledgment of the universality of "human rights" but by the internal disintegration of the world's most hyper-modernist system. Thus it is disingenuous, on the part of Avizier Tucker, to redeploy the old human rights strategy of Jan Patocka against Derrida, in order to vindicate "intellectual responsibility." Human rights are either contractual, in which case they do not cut any ice with those who are not a party to that contract, or "transcendental," in which case they can only apply to the particular cultures in which they are inextricably a part. To universalize them is nothing but an act of cultural imperialism. When all is said and done, it is not "human rights" but military power that will rid the world of the likes of Hitler. The problem with Derrida's quixotic attempt to recycle Marxism has to do with yet-to-be decostructed modernist residues rather than the modernist ruins of "human rights."

Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen

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The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment

John W. Tate

Enlightenment Universalism

Although it encompassed a variety of positions, the Enlightenment was unified by the common belief that reason could transcend contingency to establish universal "truths" and thus guarantee progress.[1] Yet for much of the Enlightenment, reason was still dependent on prior sources for its authoritative claims, e.g., nature or natural law, human desires, or interests.[2] Kant broke with this by insisting that reason had to be "autonomous" if it was to claim unconditional authority.[3] In this reformulation of the Enlightenment's concept of reason, Kant argued that reason must subject itself to constant self-criticism, so as to determine the limits of its own authority and thereby provide the basis of its

1. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, tr. by Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettgrove (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 6; and Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry. Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 14.

2. See Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment*, Vol. II (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970), pp. 168-70; Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*. 2nd Edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 234; Steven B. Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism. Rights in Context* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), pp. 25-26; Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests. Arguments for Capitalism Before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 16-19, 47-48.

3. As Rawls states: "Kant is the historical source of the idea that reason, both theoretical and practical, is self-originating and self-authenticating." John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 100. Kant himself recognized such claims for reason's "autonomy" as an explicit break with previous Enlightenment positions and a definite reformulation of the status of reason. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), A844/B872; and "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals," in Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, tr. by Lewis White Beck (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1949), IV 425.

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own legitimacy.[4]

Even in the context of the Enlightenment, the unconditional authority of reason was harshly criticized. Far from accepting reason's autonomous, unconditional status, critics such as David Hume regarded the "non-rational" source of passions as providing the conditional basis of reason, and determining the ends to which reason would be directed.[5] According to Hume, reason itself is neutral in regard to normative ends. Unable to choose between them, it is therefore reliant on passions.[6] Similarly, Edmund Burke insisted on the alternative authority of tradition or prejudice as containing a "latent wisdom" absent from Enlightenment reason. For Burke, this "latent wisdom" is to be found in the evaluative guidance which prejudices and traditions provide for reason.[7] Burke follows Hume in claiming that reason provides no normative direction and thus is incapable of autonomously legislating its own ends.[8] Although Hume preceded Kant, and Burke did not refer to Kant's work, these

4. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axii*a*. As Kant states: "Reason must in all its undertakings subject itself to criticism; should it limit freedom of criticism by any prohibitions, it must harm itself, drawing upon itself a damaging suspicion. Nothing is so important through its usefulness, nothing so sacred, that it may be exempted from this searching examination, which knows no respect for persons. Reason depends on this freedom for its very existence." *Ibid*, A738/B766. See *ibid*, Axi-xii, A751-52/B779-780.

5. According to Hume, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), Bk II. Pt III, sect. III, p.415.

6. Hume graphically describes reason's normative neutrality, as follows: it is "not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger." *Ibid*, Bk II. Pt. III, sect. III, p. 416).

7. As Burke states: ". . . we are generally men of untaught feelings . . . instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them . . . and, to take more shame to ourselves, we cherish them because they are prejudices; and the longer they have lasted, and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them. We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the *latent wisdom* which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice, with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice, and to leave nothing but the naked reason. . ." Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 183. Italics added.

8. Hence Burke insists that only historically sedimented traditions and prejudices can provide normative guidance towards appropriate ends: "When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us, nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer." *Ibid*, pp. 172-73.

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claims fundamentally challenge the Kantian Enlightenment.[9]

Burke's reservations concerning Enlightenment claims for reason's unconditional autonomy did not dissipate with the onset of modernity. Such doubts have developed along with the Enlightenment tradition. Thus contemporary critics such as Alasdair MacIntyre have questioned the very possibility of an *autonomous* rational perspective capable of complete critical independence from all prior sources. As he put it: ". . . it is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground, some locus for rationality as such, which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions. Those who have maintained otherwise either have covertly been adopting the standpoint of a tradition and deceiving themselves and perhaps others into supposing that theirs was just such a neutral ground or else have simply been in error."[10]

Along with Hume and Burke, MacIntyre rejects the central Kantian assumption that reason can provide its own normative guidance by autonomously legislating its own ends. Like Burke, MacIntyre argues that only the "situated" status of reason within a context of tradition can provide reason with definite goals and values.[11] Hans-Georg Gadamer has also questioned the unconditional authority of Enlightenment reason by emphasizing how it is always situated within particular traditions. In this context, Gadamer rejects the Kantian claim of an *a priori* status for reason – the idea that it is possible to adopt a reflective position *prior* to the very traditions which, according to Gadamer, constitute one's understanding. He calls this

9. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A744/B772, A816/B844, A839/B867; Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), sections 389, 396. On Kant's recognition of the threat Hume posed to his claims for reason's critical independence, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B19-20.

10. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 367. See also MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *op. cit.*, p. 222. Of course, such a claim strikes at the heart of Kant's critical concept of a *critique of pure reason*, whose "tribunal" was to be precisely that "neutral standing ground" which could ensure reason's critical independence. As Kant states: "It is a call to reason to undertake anew the most difficult of all its tasks, namely, that of self-knowledge, and to institute a tribunal which will assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with its own eternal and unalterable laws. This tribunal is no other than the *critique of pure reason*." Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *op. cit.*, Axi-xii.

11. As MacIntyre states: "The person outside all traditions lacks sufficient rational resources for enquiry and, *a fortiori*, for enquiry into what tradition is to be rationally preferred. . . To be outside all traditions is to be a stranger to enquiry; it is to be in a state of intellectual and moral destitution." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice, Which Rationality? op. cit.*, p. 367. For a discussion of MacIntyre's relation to Burke, see my "Dead or Alive? Reflective Versus Unreflective Traditions," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1997.

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assumption "the chimera of perfect Enlightenment."[12]

Burke's, MacIntyre's and Gadamer's case against the Kantian Enlightenment is that reason is defined by its *conditional* reliance on a prior evaluative context of tradition. To the extent that reason cannot critically evaluate its own preconditions, it lacks *autonomy* and cannot provide the basis of its own legitimacy. The consequence of this critique is to *contextualize* reason's claims, ground them in historical and cultural specificity, and reveal the sources that have resulted in the acceptance of reason as a source of evaluation. All of this has problematized the Enlightenment's legacy to modernity by revealing the *contingency* of reason's unconditional claims.[13]

The Hermeneutic Circle.

This rejection of the central assumptions of the Kantian Enlightenment defines the *hermeneutic* tradition and its central heuristic principle: the *hermeneutic circle.* Gadamer understands this circle and hermeneutics in general as a way to interpret different traditions and therefore to assume a different framework of meaning and evaluation for one's own.[14] For him, all interpretation involves a tension between different perspectives — one's own and that of the "other."[15] Thus all interpretation involves a *circular* process. It is impossible to escape one's own "horizon" and conceive the "truth" of the other entirely on its *own* terms.[16] At the same time, the identity and meaning of the "other" cannot be reduced entirely to one's

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12. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd edition, tr. by William Glen-Doepel (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), p. 340. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutical Reflection," in his *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, tr. by David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 28-29. As he puts it: "Is not, rather, all human existence, even the freest, limited and qualified in various ways? If this is true, then the idea of an absolute reason is impossible for historical humanity. Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms, i.e., it is not its own master, but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates." Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, p. 245. See also Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 142.

13. As Cassirer puts it: "For us the word 'reason' has long since lost its unequivocal simplicity even if we are in essential agreement with the basic aims of the philosophy of the Enlightenment. We can scarcely use this word any longer without being conscious of its history; and time and again we see how great a change of meaning the term has undergone." Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

14. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-37.

15. As Gadamer states: "Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of the tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naive assimilation but consciously bringing it out." *Ibid*, p. 273.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 238, 270 and 274-75.

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own preconceptions without violating its integrity. So Gadamer refers to a circular process of hermeneutic interpretation where meaning is always negotiated between one's own preconceptions and those within the horizon of the other.[17] The other's actual identity, its own specific horizon, often displaces the preconceptions which informed one's initial interpretation, forcing a re-evaluation of the meaning and identity of the other. Such a re-evaluation also involves a reinterpretation of one's own meaning and identity. This is because any interpretation of an alien horizon forces one to become increasingly self-reflective concerning the specificity of one's own.[18] This "tension," as well as the reformulation each horizon undergoes, determines the wider hermeneutic context of understanding.[19]

Although Gadamer's primary target is René Descartes, a pre-Enlightenment figure, the most important feature of the hermeneutic position is its challenge to the Enlightenment's basic assumptions.[20] Gadamer strongly opposes those elements of Cartesianism inherited by the Enlightenment, especially by Kant, and argues that it was Descartes' concept of an unconditional rational consciousness (his *cogito*) that ultimately led to the Enlightenment's denigration of tradition and prejudice as a source of "irrationality" or "error."[21] In opposition to this, Gadamer argues that, given its hermeneutic dependence on prior determinants outside the reach of rational reflection,[22] consciousness is never able to hold all of these prior determinants open to full rational evaluation – an

17. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 238 and 261.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 272-73; Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
19. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
20. *Ibid*, p. 246.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-47. Echoing Burke, Gadamer states that it was not until the enlightenment that "prejudice acquires the negative aspect we are familiar with." *Ibid*, p. 240.
22. Given the presupposition of a non-deceiving God, Descartes located apodictic certainty in the context of the *thinking self* – his *cogito*. Whereas Descartes believed his *cogito* provided a secure foundation for indubitable truth, Kant was more aware of the *hermeneutic limits* of understanding. He argued that speculative reason was never able to conceive the world in terms of the latter's intrinsic identity. Rather, all speculative truth claims were premised on "appearances." See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *op. cit.*, Bxxvi, A258/B314. In this respect, Kant recognized the *hermeneutic limits* to understanding. Consequently, this reason can never transcend its own presuppositions to achieve a knowledge of the world *in-itself*. *Ibid*, Bxx. Kant's "Copernican shift," however, was premised on the claim that while knowledge of the world was defined in terms of how the world appears *to us*, this *anthropocentric* perspective was sufficiently *universal* to make possible *apodictic* truth claims and that these claims could be independent of all contingent traditions. See *ibid*, Bxiii-xiv, Bxvi-xvii. Thus Kant's apparent *hermeneuticism*, premised on the inevitably *subjective* nature of all human understanding, is really a rigorous *universalism*, since understanding is seen to have *uniform* characteristics common to all rational beings. See Kant, "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals," *op. cit.*, IV 411.

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ability presupposed by the "autonomous" processes of Descartes' radical doubt and Kant's critique of pure reason.[23] There are no final truth claims in Gadamer's account, since understanding is always part of a hermeneutic circle – a process of criss-crossing horizons mutually affecting each other and never converging in a final objective viewpoint.[24]

Self-Referentiality

The Kantian Enlightenment was premised on the idea of reason as an *a priori* source of critical evaluation independent of, and prior to, all other evaluative sources. The premises of the hermeneutic circle, on the other hand, rest on the irreducibly *relative* context of all understanding, where interpretation is possible from a multitude of different viewpoints. Further, the perspective of the hermeneutic circle presumes that it is impossible to attain a sufficiently self-reflective position prior to these specific interpretations, against which the latter can be apodictically evaluated.[25] Rather, from the hermeneutic perspective, understanding is coextensive with interpretation itself and has its "foundations" only in prior interpretations.[26]

23. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 245, 268-69. Strictly speaking, unlike Kant, Descartes' concept of reason does not claim an unconditional, *a priori* status, since it ultimately relies on the presupposition of a non-deceiving God to overcome the sceptical problems concerning indubitable knowledge that arise once he separates individual consciousness from a wider constitutive world. On Descartes' resort to the ideal of a non-deceiving God, see René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, tr. by F. E. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 132-33. On Descartes' isolated consciousness, existing in a solipsistic context of radical doubt, see *ibid*, p. 95. Kant, on the other hand, had a far more *autonomous* concept of rational consciousness, since his reason did not need to *presuppose* the existence of God for its self-certainty, but *postulates* this existence as a practical requirement of its own legislated ends.See Kant, "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals," *op. cit.*, IV, 408; and *Critique of Pure Reason*, *op. cit.*, A817/B845-A818/B846. Nevertheless Gadamer sees Descartes as opposed to the hermeneutic tradition to the extent that, like Kant, Descartes conceives individual rational consciousness as able to find an apodictic ground of universal certainty, independent of all prior traditions, upon which to base the authority of its claims.

24. *Ibid*, pp. 237, 268, 275. See also Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, *op. cit.*, p. 144. Thus in contrast to Descartes and Kant, Gadamer states: ". . . there is no possible consciousness – we have repeatedly emphasized this, and it is the basis of the historicalness of understanding – there is no possible consciousness, however infinite, in which the 'object' that is handed down would appear in the light of eternity. Every assimilation of tradition is historically different: which does not mean that every one represents only an imperfect understanding of it. Rather, every one is the experience of a 'view' of the object itself." Gadamer, *Truth and Method, op. cit.*, p. 430.

25. Gadamer criticizes the assumption that it is possible to achieve a final, universal perspective on any particular issue as the "false objectivism" of the Enlightenment tradition. See Gadamer, "On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutic Reflection", *op. cit.*, p. 28.

26. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method, op. cit.*, pp. 268-69.

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Here hermeneutics shares a common set of assumptions with *communitarianism* and *pragmatism*. None of these philosophical traditions claim any ability to engage in universal justification. According to them, justification must occur in the self-referential context of values which, as a matter of historical contingency, are always already shared. Thus the self-styled *pragmatist* Richard Rorty has argued that liberal democratic cultures can only defend their values and practices in terms of the claim that they have *been useful* up to now — a defense already presupposing the validity of the purposes these values and practices already serve.[27]

For anti-foundationalists such as Rorty, there is nothing *prior* to these values and purposes to legitimate their validity. Only the contingent history of their past practice provides the basis for claiming that these practices should continue to be upheld. Furthermore, the evaluative criterion of *what has been useful up to now* is itself part of this past history. So it is a self-referential standard in terms of *already accepted* practices. Once again, there is a circularity here which, although different from Gadamer's hermeneutic circle (since in the case of Rorty, the circularity arises from the fact that one is self-referentially confirming one's own culture rather than

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27. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and* Solidarity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 48-49; and *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. 172. Of course, from an Enlightenment perspective, such self-referentiality leads to *relativism*. Such viewpoints, however, reject the *either/or* Kantian Enlightenment dichotomy of *either* achieving apodictic certainty *or* falling into debilitating relativism. This dichotomy is evident in Immanuel Kant, "On the Common Saying: 'This may be True in Theory, but it does not Apply in Practice'," in Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, 2nd edition, ed. by Hans Reiss, tr. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 86-87; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *op. cit.*, A751-52/B779-780. According to Rorty, this dichotomy only makes sense in the context of Enlightenment assumptions concerning the possibility of an *objective* point of view. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. For Rorty, the whole *aporia* of relativism can then be explained as an Enlightenment "hangover," since it is a problem only from the perspective of an "objective" position able to conceive of replacing relativism with universal validity. Thus the idea of relativism as a *problem* to be overcome is parasitic on the assumption that it is susceptible of a rational resolution. As Bernstein puts it: "Relativism ultimately makes sense . . . as the dialectical antithesis to objectivism. If we see through objectivism, if we expose what is wrong with this way of thinking, then we are at the same time questioning the very intelligibility of relativism." Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-67. See also Richard Bernstein, *The New Constellation. The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 327. Rorty points out how a *post-Enlightenment* perspective which rejects the possibility of objective foundations and sees justification as inevitably involving a circular process of self-confirmation, would overcome this *either/or* problem by allowing the acceptance of relative claims as the inevitable outcome of *all* interpretation and understanding. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

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attempting to hermeneutically interpret another), reflects the same dependence on preconceptions not subject to critical evaluation because they provide the premises for the very evaluative use of reason. This circularity is evident because any evaluative criterion offered as a standard of judgment by those within the hermeneutic tradition necessarily presupposes, at some pre-reflective level, the very values they are attempting to justify.[28] Thus Rorty argues that ultimate foundations legitimating a particular way of life as unconditionally superior to all others is a chimera. At most, a culture can be justified in an *ultimate* sense only to those who already share its embedded values.[29] The hermeneutic tradition recognizes this self-referentiality as inescapable. Because it is the precondition of all understanding, the entire hermeneutic context cannot be questioned in its entirety and so must presuppose some of its aspects in order to evaluate others.[30] Consequently, from the hermeneutic perspective there is always, at some level, a pre-reflective commitment to the values being justified and whose justification is accepted as persuasive.[31]

The persuasiveness of this hermeneutic perspective relative to the Kantian Enlightenment can be seen in the intellectual trajectory of one of the leading contemporary defenders of liberalism. In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls developed a "Kantian" defense of liberalism by vindicating its universal validity. Such universal claims were explicit in his account of the evaluative perspective of his *original position*. In his more recent writings, however, Rawls has adopted an explicitly hermeneutic position

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28. According to Rorty, such thinkers ". . . would happily grant that a circular justification of our practices, a justification which makes one feature of our culture look good by citing another, or comparing our culture invidiously with others by reference to our own standards, is the only sort of justification we are going to get."Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, *op. cit.*, p. 57. See Richard Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism," in *Journal of Philosophy*, 1983, p. 585.

29. Rorty thereby defines his theoretical purposes by distinguishing a *pragmatic* defence of liberal culture, which at some level presupposes the values it seeks to justify, from an Enlightenment justification insistent on apodictic foundations. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, pp. 44-45; Rorty, "Postmodernist Bourgeois Liberalism," *op. cit.*, p. 585. For a related defence of liberalism, see also John Gray, *Liberalisms: Essays in Political Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 240.

30. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity, op. cit.*, p. xvi; see also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 34.

31. Taylor articulates this as follows: "Goods . . . can't be demonstrated to someone who really is impervious to them. One can only argue convincingly about goods which already in some way impinge on people, which they already at some level respond to but may be refusing to acknowledge." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

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concerning the political justification of principles of justice.[32] Now he explicitly rejects his earlier universal claims and insists that one can only rationally justify those values one is already pre-reflectively committed to as part of one's prior identity as a member of a particular political culture.[33] Thus Rawls has explicitly swapped an *unconditional* for a *conditional* basis of justification — one which explicitly rejects the *universal* foundations of his *original position* and appeals to the *relative* context of limited political cultures as a source of political justification.[34]

Cultural Commensurability.

When followers of the hermeneutic tradition argue that specific cultures can only confirm their own values in terms of those they already hold, they refer to a background context of shared assumptions *within* which all rational claims must be evaluated. This self-referential process of justification would be entirely tautological if this background implied that all participants were already in full agreement concerning the values in question, before evaluation actually takes place, so that it would simply

32. Rawls defined the central methodological construct of his philosophical system – the *original position* – in explicitly Kantian terms: "The original position may be viewed . . . as a procedural interpretation of Kant's conception of autonomy and the categorical imperative." John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 256. Accordingly, to approach society from this perspective ". . . is to see it *sub specie aeternitatus*: it is to regard the human situation not only from all social but also from all temporal points of view." *Ibid*, p. 587. The *original position* was a monological thought procedure designed to determine what principles of justice can be chosen on rational grounds alone. These grounds presupposed modern rational choice theory, where one chooses what is in one's own best interests. Given certain ideal conditions, such as a *veil of ignorance* precluding any knowledge of one's *actual* position within the social hierarchy, Rawls argued that everyone would choose the same liberal principles of justice. This unanimous choice from a uniform basis would ensure the *universal validity* of these principles, since all participants in the *original position* would ideally be morally bound by these choices once the veil of ignorance was no longer assumed. See *ibid*, ch. 1, sect. 4, and ch. 3, sect. 24.

33. See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), pp. 10, 193-94.

34. In the context of this *hermeneutic* awareness of the limits of justification, and its inevitably self-referential character, Rawls writes: ". . . the 'real task' of justifying a conception of justice is not primarily an epistemological problem. The search for reasonable grounds for reaching agreement rooted in our conception of ourselves and in our relation to society replaces the search for moral truth interpreted as fixed by a prior and independent order of objects and relations, whether natural or divine, an order apart and distinct from how we conceive of ourselves. . . What justifies a conception of justice is not its being true to an order antecedent and given to us, but its congruence with our deeper understanding of ourselves and our aspirations, and our realization that, given our history and the traditions embedded in our public life, it is the most reasonable doctrine for us." John Rawls, "Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory," in *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 77, No. 9, 1980, pp. 518-519.

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be a reflective confirmation of a *prior consensus*. Such a background context, however, does not imply prior unanimity but only a broad context of commensurability within which comparative evaluation involving agreement and disagreement can meaningfully take place. So, e.g., commensurability within a context of disagreement would mean that there is agreement concerning what constitutes *meaningful* dialogue and disagreement rather than simply misunderstanding.[35]

For pragmatists and communitarians, rational evaluation requires this context of commensurability, if only to ensure that all participants agree on what constitutes *validity*. Only a common hermeneutic context, incorporating a shared cultural history, can provide this level of commensurability. So, for instance, while Rawls sees citizens within liberal polities as holding a variety of often incompatible private doctrines, he argues that, at the *political* level, it is possible to forge an *overlapping consensus* between these various private views.[36] He can only make this claim by assuming that, in addition to the reasonable pluralism of competing private values, there is also a shared context of commensurability when it comes to rational justification of public values. This shared hermeneutic context is the *public political culture* of a particular political community.[37] While such a political culture would include considerable political conflict and disagreement, Rawls assumes that, at the most *basic* level, this political culture is characterized by a sufficient degree of commensurability to make possible agreement on ultimate political values so that they will be comprehensible from the perspective of competing parties.

Cultural Incommensurability

The hermeneutic assumption that specific cultures are sufficiently unified to provide a degree of commensurability for meaningful argument

35. *Incommensurability* arises when a point has been reached in an exchange of views where there is no common criterion of meaningful argumentation by which to proceed further – where this very criterion has been thrown in doubt. As MacIntyre puts it, such incommensurability involves a situation ". . . in which systematic disagreement upon fundamental issues extends to disagreement over how such disagreements are to be formulated, let alone resolved. . . ." MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op., cit.,* p. 13. Any comparative claims concerning respective views is no longer possible, since there is no obvious basis of comparison or shared context of meaning within which such claims could be understood.

36. See Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. xvi, 12, 134, 192, and 303.

37. As Rawls puts it: "We start . . . by looking to the public culture itself as the shared fund of implicitly recognized basic ideas and principles. We hope to formulate these ideas and principles clearly enough to be combined into a political conception of justice congenial to our most firmly held convictions." *Ibid*, p. 8. See also pp. 13-14, 150-51, and 213.

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to take place is a contingent empirical assumption. Thus it is unlikely that two interlocutors belonging to the *same* culture will completely misunderstand each other because of the fundamental incommensurability of their "horizons." According to Gadamer, a culture constitutes a single "horizon" incorporating more limited horizons within it, thus promising at least a minimal level of commensurability.[38] Yet incommensurability either *within* or *between* cultural contexts is still a possibility. From a hermeneutic perspective, there is no guarantee of a perfectly unified context of understanding. According to MacIntyre, this perpetual possibility of incommensurability is due to the dependent status of all rational claims on a limited hermeneutic context. Consequently: ". . . the standpoint of traditions is necessarily at odds with one of the central characteristics of cosmopolitan modernity: the confident belief that all cultural phenomena must be potentially translucent to understanding, that all texts must be capable of being translated into the language which the adherents of modernity speak to each other."[39] The Enlightenment could envision ultimate commensurability between competing perspectives, since it had a concept of reason as an ultimate evaluative criterion able to reduce all phenomena to understandable terms. Accordingly, any incommensurability was due to "irrational" causes which a reinvigorated rationality would ultimately eradicate.[40] For the Enlightenment, ultimate incommensurability would amount to admitting that there are limitations to the authority of reason.[41]

Different followers of the hermeneutic tradition have been both *more* and *less* optimistic about avoiding ultimate incommensurability. MacIntyre is among the less optimistic, arguing that there is no guarantee that

38. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 271 and 273.

39. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality? op., cit.*, p.327.

40. So for instance, Zygmunt Bauman has argued that the basic impulses of modernity, inherited from the Enlightenment, are defined by a concerted attempt to eradicate the ambivalence of *incommensurability*, and replace it with *rational order.* See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), pp. 5 and 20. MacIntyre argues that the hegemony of the Enlightenment tradition within *modernity* means that *incommensurability* is not even seen as a rational possibility: "The thought which modernity . . . rejects is that there may be traditional modes of social, cultural, and intellectual life which are as such inaccessible to it and to its translators." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 387.

41. See MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, p. 172. On MacIntyre's claim that these Enlightenment assumptions concerning ultimate commensurability are incorporated within the basic assumptions of modern liberal culture, see *Whose Justice? Which Rationality? op., cit.*, p. 400.

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incommensurability will not arise between competing traditions with no shared criteria of rational evaluation.[42] Gadamer is much more optimistic. His "horizon" is a lot more amorphous than MacIntyre's "tradition" and its interpretive boundaries are far more permeable. Thus, for Gadamer, commensurability is always possible because cultures are not hermetically sealed and can always adopt more inclusive viewpoints.[43] Cultural horizons are always able to incorporate different horizons to achieve a wider, more unifying "fusion" of horizons.[44]

Taylor has also addressed the issue of cultural incommensurability. While he does not follow the Enlightenment tradition in rejecting its possibility outright, he claims that in practice it is highly unlikely.[45] Short of actually confronting a case of terminal incommensurability, evaluative strategies should assume the possibility of achieving universal understanding and validity.[46] Taylor adopts this *universalist* position because he believes it is impossible to live one's life meaningfully as a relativist. Personal identity requires values with a constitutive meaning. Therefore, these values cannot be held *relatively* but must be taken as having moral authority transcending a purely idiosyncratic

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42. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

43. Accordingly, Gadamer says that ". . . the closed horizon that is supposed to enclose a culture is an abstraction. The historical movement of human life consists in the fact that it is never utterly bound to any one standpoint, and hence can never have a truly closed horizon. The horizon is, rather, something into which we move and that moves with us. Horizons change for a person who is moving. Thus the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 271 and 273. See also Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," in Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 15-17.

44. As Gadamer states: "Understanding . . . is always the fusion of these horizons which we imagine to exist by themselves." Gadamer, *Truth and Method op. cit.*, p. 273.

45. As Taylor states: "There may be different kinds of human realization which are really incommensurable. This would mean that there would be no way of moving from one of these to the other and presenting the transition without self-delusion as either a gain or a loss in anything. It would just be a total switch, generating incomprehension of one's past . . . this is a real possibility, but I doubt if it is true." Taylor *Sources of the Self*, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

46. For Taylor: "It may be that our contact with certain cultures will force us to recognize incommensurability. . . . But we certainly shouldn't assume this is so a priori. Until we meet this limit, there is no reason not to think of the goods we are trying to define and criticize as universal, provided we afford the same status to those of other societies we are trying to understand. This does *not* mean of course that all our, or all their, supposed goods will turn out at the end of the day to be defensible as such; just that we don't start with a preshrunk moral universe in which we take as given that their goods have nothing to say to us or perhaps ours to them." Taylor, *Sources of the Self, op. cit.*, p. 62.

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perspective.[47] Given this commitment, Taylor argues that, when faced with significant cultural or moral conflict, one must adopt an *absolute* rather than a *relative* defense of the cultural values constitutive of one's identity.[48]

Ironically, Taylor's advocacy of a non-negotiable commitment to one's "horizon of significance" is consistent with his recognition of the hermeneutic limits of evaluation. In ethical evaluation these *limits* refer to one's cultural background as a necessary precondition of judgment. Consequently, ethical evaluation is necessarily self-referential precisely because of the non-negotiable commitment to one's inescapable "horizons of significance." These commitments are the ultimate standard of reference and are presupposed by Taylor's model of hermeneutic evaluation – his "Best Account" (BA) principle — which takes the values constituting self-identity as the ultimate point of reference and subscribes to the hermeneutic tradition's recognition of the inherent circularity of such forms of judgment.[49]

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47. Taylor argues that such transcendent authority is associated with the most deeply held convictions since one's evaluative environment is defined by preexisting "horizons of significance." As he states: "Things take on importance against a background of intelligibility. Let us call this a horizon. It follows that one of the things that we can't do, if we are to define ourselves significantly, is suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us." Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 37. Moral relativist positions directly conflict with this position. Taylor claims that this sort of relativism denies values their transcendent significance insofar as it ". . . slides towards an affirmation of choice itself. All options are equally worthy, because they are freely chosen, and it is choice that confers worth. . . . But this implicitly denies the existence of a pre-existing horizon of significance, whereby some things are worthwhile and others less so, and still others not at all, quite anterior to choice." *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38. Consequently, Taylor argues that such relativism is inconsistent with the normal understanding of self-realization, which "presupposes that some things are important beyond the self, that there are some goods or purposes the furthering of which has significance for us, and which hence can provide the significance a fulfilling life needs. A totally and fully consistent subjectivism would tend towards emptiness: nothing would count as a fulfillment in a world in which literally nothing was important but self-fulfillment." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

48. According to Taylor: "When we stand within the moral outlook of universal and equal respect, we don't consider its condemnation of slavery, widow-burning, human sacrifice, or female circumcision only as expressions of *our* way of being, inviting a reciprocal and equally valid condemnation of our free labor, widow-remarriage, bloodless sacrifice, and sex equality from the societies where these strange practices flourish. . . [T]he moral outlook makes wider claims. . . it engenders a pitiless criticism of all those beliefs and practices within our society which fail to meet the standard of universal respect. It ruthlessly sets aside the goods involved in these peccant practices. It is hard to see why this critical radicalism should suddenly fail when we get to the boundaries of our society — boundaries which are hard to draw in any case — and condone the often much more severe lapses we find in premodern civilizations." Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

49. *Ibid*, p. 69.

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To judge in any more "neutral" or "universal" way would be to engage in what the hermeneutic outlook claims is a cognitive impossibility — an attempt to abstract from particular cultural backgrounds in order to adopt an *a priori* position of unconditional evaluation. Even though it implies a circular process of evaluation, Taylor does not see his BA principle as entailing *moral relativism*. On the contrary, he argues that it presupposes a *moral realism*, since the values invoked are real in that they are deeply constitutive of self-identity. This *reality* is a non-relative context of judgement since, according to Taylor, it is impossible to make sense of the world without it.

Rorty is at one with Taylor's BA principle in that he also recognizes the self-referential process inherent in judgment. To this extent, Rorty argues that even prior to being confronted with instances of ultimate cultural incommensurability, all processes of justification are "ethnocentric."[50] But this ethnocentrism is only a problem from the viewpoint of the Enlightenment distinction between a universal, rational judgment and one informed by cultural bias, implying the need to adopt the former in order to overcome the latter.[51] Along with the Enlightenment's critique of relativism, this indictment of "ethnocentrism" assumes that universally valid judgments are possible and that ethnocentrism is therefore a problem. This is precisely what those who recognize the hermeneutic limits of judgment reject, thereby defusing the moral and epistemological stigma of ethnocentrism. Given its self-referential nature, they see ethnocentrism as an inevitable part of judgment within the hermeneutic circle. As Rorty states: "This sort of ethnocentrism is . . . inevitable and unobjectionable. It amounts to little more than the claim that most people can rationally change their

50. There are, however, significant differences between Rorty and Taylor's positions. Rorty would repudiate Taylor's *moral realism*, insofar as it relies on "horizons of significance" which both *precede* and *inform* moral choice. Rorty is less *communitarian* than this. He argues that all values are the contingent and arbitrary products of choices, and his ideal of the liberal *ironist* is the sophisticated individual who recognizes that there is no ultimate philosophical guarantee of moral commitments outside arbitrary choices, and embraces this *relativist* context of moral value. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, *op. cit.*, pp. xv-xvi and 73-74. Consequently, Rorty is guilty of precisely the sort of *relativism* Taylor criticizes. In defending tradition-constituted enquiry, MacIntyre has adopted an explicitly communitarian critique of Rorty's relativism. He says that Rorty's position does not exhibit a "moral argument free from unwarranted philosophical pretensions, but the decay of moral reasoning." See MacIntyre, "Moral Arguments and Social Contexts," in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 1983, p. 590. For Rorty's critique of communitarian assumptions, see "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," in Richard Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism and Truth. Philosophical Papers*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

51. Richard Rorty, "On Ethnocentrism: A Reply to Clifford Geertz," in Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism, and Truth*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

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beliefs and desires only by holding most of those beliefs and desires constant. . . ."[52] For both Rorty and Taylor, self-referentiality is a pragmatic requirement of all evaluation. Only in this context can the "other" become sufficiently familiar with one's frame of reference to make coherent, persuasive claims on one's understanding. Consequently, as with Gadamer's account of the inescapability of "horizons," both Taylor and Rorty believe that the "other" can only become a "truth for us" if initially assimilable within one's frame of reference.

Intolerance and Deception.

When faced with ultimate incommensurability, self-referential, "ethnocentric" judgments may result in the "other" not being extended equal respect or even tolerated. This predicament can arise insofar as the hermeneutic limitations of judgment mean that it is impossible to evaluate these differences except against a background of commitment to one's own values. Rorty accepts this consequence and concedes that, when faced with antagonists who share no common ground with liberal democratic culture, intolerance is a valid liberal response.[53] Anticipating adverse liberal reaction, he states: "If this . . . seems shockingly ethnocentric, it is because the philosophical tradition has accustomed us to the idea that anybody who is willing to listen to reason — to hear out all the arguments — can be brought around to the truth. This view . . . is intertwined with the idea that the human self has a center (a divine spark, or a truth-tracking faculty called 'reason') and that argumentation will, given time and patience, penetrate to this center."[54] The hermeneutic position is defined by precisely the opposite set of "anti-foundationalist" assumptions, i.e., by the belief that there are no guarantees of reaching "truth," since the latter is not prior to the actual values, perspectives and practices people live by.

The stigma of intolerance follows from the Enlightenment values of equal respect; in particular, Kant's moral doctrine of treating others as *ends in themselves*.[55] Similarly, the concern that the hermeneutic perspective

52. "Cosmopolitanism without Emancipation: A Response to Jean-Francois Lyotard," in Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism and Truth*, *op. cit.*, p. 212. See also "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others. Philosophical Papers*, Vol. II (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 168.

53. Rorty, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," *op. cit.*, p. 190.

54. *Ibid*, p. 188.

55. Kant defined his supreme principle of morality, the *categorical imperative*, precisely in such terms: "The imperative, therefore, is the following: Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only." Kant, "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals," IV 429.

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cannot critically reflect on its own preconditions of evaluation also draws on the Kantian heritage of critical independence, in particular Kant's claim that whatever is exempt from the process of criticism and evaluation awakens "just suspicion, and cannot claim the sincere respect which reason accords only to that which has been able to sustain the test of free and open examination."[56] The fear that to remain within hermeneutic confines implies remaining dupes of the selective vision, or deliberate deception intrinsic to those very confines, is definitely an idiosyncratic Enlightenment concern. According to the defenders of Enlightenment rationality, traditions are social practices embedded in contexts of unequal and often coercive social relations, thus they too will exhibit evaluative orientation and practices which are unequal and selective in their effects. Following Kant, Enlightenment thinkers such as Habermas have insisted on a standard of criticism whose independence moves beyond the hermeneutic context of the circular self-confirmation of such practices, and can question that same hermeneutic context.[57]

MacIntyre's Expansion of the Hermeneutic Circle.

While MacIntyre does not believe that the absolute critical independence demanded by the Enlightenment tradition is possible, he also criticizes the limited, self-confirming modes of justification associated with closed hermeneutic circles.[58] This is why he has made a concerted effort to establish the possibility of rational evaluation between distinct and separate hermeneutic contexts. If rational claims can be made concerning alternative traditions which will be accepted as valid by members of those traditions, and yet acknowledge that these claims can only be made from a limited

56. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Axii*a*. This confrontation of the hermeneutic tradition with Kantian demands for critical independence has been continued by Habermas in his dialogue with Gadamer. As Habermas states: "The right of reflection requires that the hermeneutic approach limit itself. It requires a system of reference that transcends the context of tradition as such. Only then can tradition be criticized as well." See Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), p. 170.

57. According to Habermas: "Hermeneutics has taught us that we are always a participant as long as we move within the natural language and that we cannot step outside the role of a reflective partner. There is, therefore, no general criterion available to us which would allow us to determine when we are subject to the false consciousness of a psuedo-normal understanding and consider something as a difficulty that can be resolved by hermeneutical means when, in fact, it requires systematic explanation." See Jürgen Habermas, "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in Michael T. Gibbons, ed., *Interpreting Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 184. See also Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 160-61.

58. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69 and 366.

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hermeneutic context, then this would go a long way in meeting Enlightenment demands. In particular, it would allow for commensurability and therefore for dialogue and tolerance. Secondly, it would provide a critical perspective outside particular traditions to evaluate them. This, in turn, would allow for coercive, deceptive or unequal elements of these traditions to be highlighted and evaluated from a perspective independent of the self-confirming context of these traditions. While the viewpoint of an alternative tradition does not constitute the *a priori* context of autonomous critical evaluation Kant demanded, it does go beyond the *aporia* of intolerance and deception possible if all evaluation is seen as ultimately self-referential, "ethnocentric" and, therefore, inevitably leading to incommensurability.

For MacIntyre, traditions are not simply a set of claims; they extend beyond the cognitive sphere to embody actual forms of life and reflect this wider material background.[59] Indeed, identity itself is the "bearer" of specific traditions.[60] Moreover, all rational claims occur within the context of traditions and are shaped by this prior hermeneutic context.[61] MacIntyre's attempt to develop criteria against which different traditions can be evaluated can be seen as an "expansion" of the hermeneutic circle, insofar as it attempts to move beyond the self-referential context of internal evaluation, often associated with that circle, to include other traditions. This is an "expansion" rather than a distinct "break" with the hermeneutic circle, since MacIntyre does not claim that rational evaluation can take place from an "autonomous" viewpoint but insists that such evaluation always takes place within the hermeneutic context of one tradition or another.[62] He argues that it is possible to compare one tradition with a rival one by adopting the hermeneutic perspective of this *second* tradition,[63] which would thereby allow for the critical independence required to rationally evaluate one's *first* tradition from outside its own self-referential context.[64]

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59. As MacIntyre states: "Philosophical theories give organized expression to concepts and theories already embodied in forms of practice and types of community." (MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 390).

60. "What I am, therefore, is in key part what I inherit, a specific past that is present to some degree in my present. I find myself part of a history and that is generally to say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition." (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *op. cit.*, p. 221).

61. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-402. As such, for him, rational justification *within* traditions is inherently self-referential and open-ended, part of the ongoing development of the tradition itself.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

63. *Ibid*, pp. 394-95.

64. *Ibid*, pp. 166-67.

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Here MacIntyre is referring to a mode of evaluation beyond what he refers to as "warranted assertibility," i.e., the process of self-confirming justification internal to specific hermeneutic contexts and necessarily presupposing a concept of validity already justifying the basic assumptions of these contexts.[65] He does recognize that the limited contexts of hermeneutic justification implied by "warranted assertibility" generate incommensurability when confronted with an alien tradition whose own mode of "warranted assertibility" is premised on incompatible values. In order to carry out any comparative analysis, standards of rational evaluation are needed to evaluate one tradition against the other. Such a wider mode of evaluation is indispensable, since each tradition will make claims to *unconditional* authority not limited to its warranted assertibility.[66] Otherwise, as sets of standards, perspectives and practices embodied in actual historical communities, MacIntyre's traditions generate the possibility of conflict and incommensurability between traditions.

His account of rational evaluation between traditions seeks to deal precisely with the possibility of such instances of incommensurability. Here incommensurability means that it is not possible to reach a position able to incorporate both alternative viewpoints. There is simply no common ground between incommensurable traditions from which to compare them. The very question of what would be a "rational" resolution would result in different answers from the perspective of each tradition. MacIntyre argues that the only way to evaluate alternative traditions comparatively is to become immersed in *both* traditions, so that one can alternatively adopt the hermeneutic viewpoint of each and thereby attempt to overcome the instances of incommensurability between them.[67] Yet adopting the hermeneutic viewpoint of a *second* tradition is not simply a cognitive matter. Since traditions are embodied

65. *Ibid*, pp. 168-69.

66. As MacIntyre writes: ". . . in judging of truth and falsity there is always some ineliminable reference beyond the scheme within which those judgements are made and beyond the criteria which provide the warrants for assertibility within that scheme. Truth cannot be identified with, or collapsed into warranted assertibility. And a conception of *what is* which is more and other than a conception of *what appears to be the case in the light of the most fundamental criteria governing assertibility within any particular scheme* is correspondingly required. . . ." MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-22.

67. Indeed, if one cannot adopt the hermeneutic perspective of *more than one* tradition, then it is impossible to see the cognitive limitations of one's initial tradition. See MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

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in actual ways of life, the only way out of the context of "warranted assertibility" to evaluate that context from an *external* perspective is to become fully immersed in the hermeneutic context of another tradition, acquiring its values as a "second *first* language." MacIntyre claims that from the perspective of such a second first language, it is possible to identify the limitations of one's own beliefs and explain them in ways not possible from within one's own tradition.[68] The "critical independence" associated with the external perspective provided by an alternative tradition as a second first language is not a "neutral" but simply *another* perspective shaped by its own hermeneutic limits and blind spots. It too will presuppose the worth of its own values. Nevertheless, it does provide a viewpoint outside of the self-confirming parameters of one's original tradition and thus reveal the latter's *aporia* or *lacunae* not visible from within its boundaries.

The Hermeneutic Leap

Acquiring the hermeneutic viewpoint of another tradition as a second first language implies a capacity to immerse oneself within this second tradition independently of the first tradition. Only then could this second tradition become an additional first language. It "requires knowing the culture, so far as is possible, as a native inhabitant knows it, and speaking, hearing, writing, and reading the language as a native inhabitant speaks, hears, writes and reads it."[69] This *hermeneutic leap* – the ability to live and think within a second tradition independently of the first — allows for the comparison of two rival traditions.[70] This does not require any initial commensurability between the two rival traditions, since the acquisition of a second first language requires the complete suspension of the initial

68. These second traditions ". . . have to be learned as second first languages or not at all." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 375. ". . . the acquisition of the language-in-use of whatever particular rival tradition is in question, as . . . a second first language . . . requires a work of the imagination whereby the individual is able to place him or herself imaginatively within the scheme of belief inhabited by those whose allegiance is to the rival tradition, so as to perceive and conceive the natural and social worlds as they perceive and conceive them." *Ibid*, pp. 394-95.

69. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

70. This, however, is far from easy: "In controversy between rival traditions the difficulty in passing from the first stage to the second is that it requires a rare gift of empathy as well as of intellectual insight for the protagonists of such a tradition to be able to understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of their rival in such a way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to recharacterize their own beliefs in an appropriate manner from the alien perspective of the rival tradition." *Ibid*, p. 167.

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tradition. Consequently, in order to understand it, it is unnecessary to interpret or translate this second language in terms commensurable with the first. Rather, it is approached as an additional first language. Other followers of the hermeneutic tradition have rejected the possibility that one can become completely immersed in an alien hermeneutic circle,[71] independently of the initial hermeneutic context – most notably Gadamer.[72] It is also the basic assumption behind claims that self-referential justification is inevitable, as in Taylor's BA principle or Rorty's acknowledgment of the inescapability of ethnocentrism. Yet MacIntyre's hermeneutic leap is significant in that it avoids this need for initial commensurability by escaping the self-referentiality of a single tradition. As he put it: "The argument that only insofar as we can come to understand what it is that is allegedly inaccessible to us could we have grounds for believing in such inaccessibility, and that the acquisition of such understanding is of itself sufficient to show that what was alleged to be inaccessible is in fact not so, carries conviction only when it is supposed that the acquisition of the understanding of the inaccessible is a matter of translating it into our own language-in-use. But if . . . a condition of discovering the inaccessible is in fact a matter of two stages, in the first of which we acquire a second language-in-use as a second first language and only in the second of which can we learn that we are unable to translate what we are now able to say in our second first language into our first first language, then this argument loses force."[73]

How is it possible to engage in a comparative evaluation of two rival traditions when, in each case, the tradition is only evaluated from the hermeneutic context of another? How can one make comparative claims beyond the "warranted assertibility" of limited hermeneutic contexts? MacIntyre points out that, within any tradition there are a series of problematic features, recognized by the tradition itself, which must be

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71. At one point, however, MacIntyre retracts this idea of a complete *hermeneutic leap*, and total identification with one's *new* tradition as a *second first language*, when he describes one's acquisition of a new tradition in terms of "role-playing," where one does not fully identify with the new tradition, but still interpret it within the original context of the old tradition. *Ibid*, p. 395. Rather than acquiring the second tradition as a first language, one "empathizes" with it from the perspective of the original tradition. This is inconsistent within MacIntyre's broader position, which clearly insists on a complete hermeneutic identification with the second tradition as a first language, independent of the interpretive perspective of the initial tradition.

72. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-37, 238, 250 and 271. Gadamer, however, does not believe this limits understanding since his hermeneutic "horizons" are sufficiently malleable to encompass a "fusion" with all others. *Ibid*, pp. 272-73.

73. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality, op. cit.*, p. 387.

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solved if further development is to take place: "At any point it may happen to any tradition-constituted enquiry that by its own standards of progress it ceases to make progress."[74] It is in these instances of "epistemological crisis" that a particular tradition can be *rationally* evaluated against a rival one.[75] Since the "epistemological crisis" is recognized by the first tradition, its resolution from the perspective of the second would have to be acknowledged by the first tradition as an instance of rational progress beyond its own ability, thus acknowledging the superior rationality of the second tradition.[76] Further, insofar as the second tradition could account for the first tradition's inability to resolve problems because of inherent hermeneutic limitations, it would indicate a rational comprehensiveness (and therefore progress) on the part of the second tradition which is absent in the first.[77]

This process of evaluation, from the perspective of one tradition or another, allows for comparative analysis centered around the relative capacity of each tradition to resolve the other's "epistemological crises." Any truth claims made within this context, however, can never approach the *a priori* standards of the Kantian Enlightenment. They are always internal to particular traditions and radically open-ended in terms of possible revision in light of further developments within their own tradition or rival claims from alternative traditions.[78] This open-endedness insures that the validity claims arising in this context are not inherently self-confirming but have a standard of comparison with a rival tradition and thus move beyond the limited validity of "warranted assertibility."[79] Encounters with rival traditions challenge one's own hermeneutical presuppositions and lead traditions to *maturity*, since their standards and judgments have acquired an authority beyond the limited context of "warranted assertibility."[80]

Limits of Comparative Evaluation

MacIntyre's hermeneutic leap — the acquisition of a "second first language" — implies a level of self-reflexivity that the hermeneutic tradition has been almost unanimous in claiming is impossible. This hermeneutic leap

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74. *Ibid*, p. 361.
75. *Ibid*, p. 388.
76. *Ibid*, pp. 166-67 and 363-65.
77. *Ibid*, p. 362; and MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 and 180-81.
78. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.
79. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality, op. cit.*, p. 388; MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
80. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality? op. cit.*,, p. 327.

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seems to follow Descartes in assuming that it is possible to bracket one's own presuppositions, while shifting to an "external" perspective (in MacIntyre's case: a second tradition; in Descartes' case: a disembodied, isolated self-consciousness). A second criticism of the hermeneutic leap is that the hermeneutic circle, as the irreducible context of understanding within a tradition, is essentially a pragmatic context of thought and action. The meaning and worth of values, practices, and even rational claims are inextricable from the prior purposes, intentions and projects that are part of one's tradition.[81] Within the hermeneutic tradition, it is the purposive context of tradition — its orientation toward specific ends and the realization of specific purposes — which provides reason itself with its evaluative direction. Consequently, it is not immediately obvious that one can evaluate the values, meanings and rational claims of one's tradition from a position "external" to that tradition and its purposes, since the adoption of a second first language would impose different evaluative orientations and purposes applicable to the second tradition but not the first. This is effectively a restatement of the problem of incommensurability between two rival traditions, which MacIntyre's hermeneutic leap is initially able to overcome. However, given the pragmatic context of tradition, this problem of incommensurability may be so pervasive as to undermine *any* attempt to understand tradition-constituted judgments outside of their original pragmatic context.[82]

The inherently pragmatic context of traditions, i.e., the fact that the commitment to prior purposes is essential for any evaluation of meaning within a tradition, may mean that there will be very few areas within which "external" (and comparative) evaluation of a tradition can take place, since few of these same "purposes" (necessary for immanent understanding) would be shared by that external position.[83] The incongruent nature of traditions, their very different hermeneutic contexts, and the fact that the pragmatic context of traditions presumes an understanding of their fundamental purposes, means that MacIntyre must limit the real possibility of comparative evaluation between traditions to situations

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81. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

82. MacIntyre recognizes these problems in the context of "naming" – which due to the wider social context which the meaning of these "names" relies upon, prevents their translation and comparative evaluation in terms of a rival tradition: "In such systems names are used on the assumption that certain beliefs entrenched in the social order are true. If and insofar as the use of a name presupposes such beliefs, no translation into the language of a different community with different beliefs can be achieved by simply reproducing the name or some version of it. . . ." *Ibid*, p. 377.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

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of "epistemological crisis," where the immanent understanding of a tradition's pragmatic context is less relevant. In such situations, the pragmatic continuity between traditions is less relevant since, even on its own terms, the original tradition's orientations have "failed" (as reflected by the "crisis") and no longer provide a coherent context of meaning even for its own adherents. In such a situation, it may be possible that an "external" evaluation of a tradition, while not sharing that tradition's purposes (and thus not exhibiting a pragmatic continuity with it), may provide a salient analysis independent of that tradition's pragmatic context, insofar as such an external perspective can reveal hitherto invisible *lacunae* and *aporia* that have led to the "crisis."

The constitutive role of a tradition's pragmatic context limits how far one can go with "epistemological crisis" as a standard of rational comparison able to avoid the problems of lack of pragmatic continuity between traditions. Given the inherently pragmatic context of enquiry internal to all traditions, the impetus such an "epistemological crisis" provides to exchange one's tradition for another makes the other more successful tradition appear "attractive" only insofar as it can account for *old problems* and, more importantly, fulfill *old purposes* more successfully than the original tradition. While the very existence of an epistemological crisis implies that the original tradition has failed to fulfill old purposes, it does not mean that these purposes are no longer important. On the contrary, personal identity is fundamentally embedded in this pragmatic context. While the solutions provided by the original tradition may fail, the salience of these problems remains, and the second tradition's account will only be accepted as "superior" if it addresses these personal concerns derived from the first tradition better than the first tradition could. Consequently, while a hermeneutic leap into a second first language may allow for a temporarily abstraction from these personal concerns, since a new constitutive identity is acquired within a new tradition, any ultimate acceptance of this second hermeneutic context as superior must ultimately be premised on an acceptance of this superiority both from this second perspective *and from the perspective of the original tradition* with its original problems. This consensus between the two traditions presumes a significant level of pragmatic continuity in order to provide the commensurability of outlook and understanding necessary for such agreement.

Contrary to claims that the agreement of *both* traditions is necessary to validate "rational progress," MacIntyre's focus on "epistemological crisis" suggests that the *only* perspective of the *second tradition* is relevant if

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it can provide a more rationally comprehensive account of the failures of the first tradition.[84] This is to treat the "epistemological crisis" as a limited problematic which can be considered independently of the pragmatic context of the first tradition (what gave the crisis its salience as a "crisis" in the first place). It amounts to reifying the "epistemological crisis" outside of its original hermeneutic context and hypostatizing it as a neutral standard of comparison by seeing it as a discrete set of problems which can be impartially confronted by all, with the tradition receiving the highest marks being the one that can both solve the most problems and provide the most convincing explanation of why all other candidates could not. Given the claim that it is only the pragmatic context of the first tradition — its goals and purposes — which defines this "epistemological crisis" as a "crisis" in the first place, it is doubtful whether an "epistemological crisis" can be treated as such a discrete, isolated set of standards for comparative evaluation between traditions. It is therefore questionable whether the "more comprehensive account" of the second tradition can be meaningful *outside* of the pragmatic perspective of the crisis-ridden first tradition, and therefore whether this second account *on its own* is sufficient to validate the superiority of the second tradition.

MacIntyre has insisted that truth claims within particular traditions occur in a pragmatic context where they cannot be separated from the wider purposes of the tradition itself.[85] This pragmatic context implies that insofar as one accepts the superior standards of truth of a *second tradition*, one must also adopt its wider purposes which give meaning to those truths. To the extent that these purposes within a second tradition lack pragmatic continuity with the first tradition, this involves a fundamental transformation of hermeneutic identity rather than simply a shift in epistemological method. It would therefore have far more in common with what MacIntyre refers to as "those abrupt general changes in belief which occur when, for example, a community undergoes a mass conversion."[86] He further suggests that this radical transformation of hermeneutic identity is a necessary

84. Indeed, MacIntyre's point is that this account by the second tradition must be sufficient on its own as a validation of rational progress, precisely because it is a *more comprehensive* account than that available within the first tradition. In other words, it is those aspects which make the second tradition superior over the first which will more than likely *not* be understood from the perspective of the first tradition, and so perhaps unable to be conceded from the perspective of the first tradition – thus vitiating agreement between the two traditions. See *Whose Justice? Which Rationality? op. cit.*, p. 362.

85. *Ibid*, pp. 401-403.

86. *Ibid*, p. 356.

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concomitant of the replacement of one tradition by the "rational superiority" of another in response to an epistemological crisis.[87] It is questionable, however, whether such pragmatic discontinuity between traditions, even in the exceptional circumstances of "epistemological crisis," is consistent with MacIntyre's account of the possibility of comparative rational evaluation between traditions. The only way the validity of the retrospective account provided by the second first language could be accepted would be if that account is acceptable to the pragmatic context of the first tradition. This would only be possible if the second first language retained significant pragmatic continuity with the old tradition rather than the hermeneutic rupture MacIntyre describes.

MacIntyre's account of comparative evaluation between traditions or of the rational progress of one tradition beyond another does not imply this level of pragmatic continuity. On the contrary, he insists that there will be a distinct lack of continuity between traditions when a rationally superior one replaces another during an "epistemological crisis."[88] But the determination of higher superiority is not a matter of neutral comparison against some discrete standard such as an epistemological problematic. Such a demonstration is only meaningful if there is sufficient pragmatic continuity with the older purposes which set the standards of what has to be achieved in the first place. Only then will it give such an achievement meaning and salience as a "rational advance" beyond the failure to achieve these things within the first tradition.

While MacIntyre's "hermeneutic leap" between traditions allows a temporary distance from one's original hermeneutic identity, thus allowing "external" evaluation of the first tradition independently of any pragmatic continuity, the validity of this evaluation does not imply a rejection but in fact a continuity with the original pragmatic purposes. Only such a mutual agreement can give the second tradition a pragmatic worth relative to the first. Further, it is not sufficient to claim that the adoption of the second first language is tantamount to adopting a hermeneutic perspective which no longer sees the purposes of the older tradition as significant, thus doing away with the need for pragmatic continuity and allowing the acceptance of the retrospective account of rational superiority offered by the second first language. This would beg the question, since it is only if one is persuaded (from the perspective of the original tradition) that the second first language does in fact offer a rationally superior resolution to

87. *Ibid*, p. 365.
88. *Ibid*, p. 362.

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the older problematic that there will be a willingness to adopt the second first language as a permanent hermeneutic identity.

This claim that a sufficient level of pragmatic continuity with the old tradition is a fundamental prerequisite for any evaluation of its relative worth from the perspective of a second first language presupposes MacIntyre's own argument concerning the irreducibly pragmatic context of traditions and their embodiment in wider forms of life. To the extent that he sees this pragmatic context as central to the internal meanings of traditions, it is unclear how he can claim that a more rationally comprehensive account of the failures of the original tradition can be provided by the perspective of a second first language in the absence of a pragmatic continuity with the first tradition.

MacIntyre's Either/or Dilemma

Yet the paradox is that, if one insists on this pragmatic continuity, then the rational advantages MacIntyre claims for external evaluation from a second first language are lost. If the original hermeneutic context informs one's understanding of the second tradition, then there is no full identification with the second language as an additional first language. This undermines its ability to reveal the *aporia* and *lacunae* of the first tradition not apparent from the original hermeneutic context. Further, only an external evaluation, which does not trade on the presuppositions of the original hermeneutic circle, can provide the initial conditions for moving beyond the self-confirming context of "warranted assertibility." Hence, MacIntyre's position leads to an either/or dilemma. One can retain a living memory of prior purposes (as a *first* first language) when externally evaluating the original tradition, thus ensuring the pragmatic continuity necessary for mutual agreement between traditions. What this means, however, is that no *second* first language has really been acquired and that the original tradition has not really been "externally" evaluated, since it still informs the interpretation provided by the second tradition. This vitiates the context-transcendent authority of any comparative evaluative claims made within this context. On the other hand, if one succeeds in achieving this external evaluation by carrying out a complete hermeneutic leap into a second hermeneutic context the break in pragmatic continuity with the original tradition will vitiate any possible mutual agreement concerning the validity of this "external" evaluation. The result will be a schizophrenic perspective of two entirely incommensurable first languages unable to agree on the account each provides of the other.

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The "Third" Viewpoint

This dilemma is intensified by the nature of the evaluation MacIntyre presupposes. He repeatedly claims that all evaluation *always* takes place from the perspective of either one or another tradition. This precludes the possibility of a simultaneous assessment of two traditions at once from a viewpoint independent of either of them.[89] Only if one can hold on to the first and second first languages simultaneously, evaluating each by the other, can the pragmatic continuity between traditions and the rational authority of external evaluation be maintained, thus resolving the dilemma. Such simultaneous evaluation is impossible, since one can only judge from the limited hermeneutic perspective of either one or the other tradition. At any rate, this simultaneity implies a third, prior viewpoint which would avoid this problem, since the pragmatic continuity between the two traditions would no longer be required for comparative assessment. Agreement could be forged from this third viewpoint alone, independently of the hermeneutic perspective of the two traditions being compared.

This third viewpoint would not necessarily be *neutral* or *apodictic*, as presupposed by the Kantian Enlightenment tradition. Its "context-independence" only refers to its independence from the hermeneutic context of the two traditions under evaluation. It might embody a further tradition, though this poses the risk of infinite regression (insofar as the perspective of a fourth tradition would be required to comparatively evaluate the third tradition in relation to the first two, and so on). Whether this third viewpoint embodies a further tradition or not, it does require sufficient critical independence from either of the traditions under evaluation so as to be able to appropriate and assess both simultaneously.

To the extent that this third viewpoint implies the ability to move beyond the encounter between two traditions to appropriate both simultaneously on *neutral* ground, it is precisely what MacIntyre claims to be impossible. Then it is safe to assume that he does not believe it is possible to simultaneously hold on to two traditions, but that all comparative claims can only be made within either one or the other context of competing traditions. Since this third, context-independent point of evaluation cannot be reached, the comparative evaluation between traditions will

89. MacIntyre defines this process of comparative evaluation as follows: ". . . it is indeed only relative to some competing theory or set of competing theories that any particular theory can be held to be justified or unjustified. There is no such thing as justification as such, just as there is no such thing as justification independent of the context of any tradition." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

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always reproduce the either/or dilemma: either a failure to reach agreement from within the original tradition concerning the claims of the second first language, or a failure to fully adopt the external perspective of the second first language and therefore achieve a fully independent evaluation of the original tradition. Here the main problem with MacIntyre's account of rational evaluation between traditions is a direct result of the advantages he supposes this mode of evaluation provides. The very "externality" of this mode of evaluation from a second first language, its critical independence from the original hermeneutic context, results in the problem of pragmatic discontinuity and incommensurability with the perspective of the original tradition.

The Exceptions that Prove the Rule.

The irony here is that, at various points, MacIntyre's account of comparative evaluation requires him to move against his formal viewpoint that can only be evaluated from one tradition at a time. In other words, the implicit requirements of his account contradict the formal nature of its pronouncements. Thus at one point he claims that: "The characteristic mark of someone who has. . . acquired two first languages is to be able to recognize where and in what respects utterances in the one are untranslatable into the other."[90] This implies a point of sufficient commensurability where the two languages can be simultaneously compared, i.e., the possibility of holding on to two traditions at once. If one were always leaping from one hermeneutic context to another, it would be impossible to reach a point where a simultaneous comparison of translatibility could be undertaken, since one's perspective would always be predetermined by a single tradition, with all the partial self-referentiality this entails, relative to an alien tradition. Consequently, in the absence of pragmatic continuity between the two traditions, comparison implies a third, independent cognitive viewpoint from whose perspective the two traditions could be simultaneously evaluated.

Finally, MacIntyre's primary example of rational progress between traditions also seems to assume that it is possible to hold on to two traditions at once and evaluate them from a third viewpoint. This is the example of Aquinas' synthesis of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism.[91] His

90. *Ibid*, p. 375.

91. MacIntyre points out that prior to Aquinas' synthesis, *Aristotelianism* and *Augustinianism* had been characterized by "apparently incompatible and conflicting demands" which in their 13th century versions appeared "irremedially opposed to one another." MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

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description of Aquinas' achievement implies that it is possible to simultaneously occupy the hermeneutic contexts of two traditions from a more "comprehensive" third viewpoint. Aquinas was educated within both the traditions of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism. Rather than dialectically shifting between them, MacIntyre's text suggests that Aquinas was able to hold on to two traditions at once and provide a simultaneous evaluation of both.[92] But this rootedness in two traditions implies a third point of evaluation, independent of either, from which the two traditions are simultaneously assessed. Such a third point is required because the evaluative standpoint cannot be internal to the hermeneutic context of either of these traditions. Aquinas could not have achieved his "synthesis" if he was continually assessing Aristotelianism wholly from within the perspective of Augustinianism, or assessing Augustinianism wholly from within the perspective of Aristotelianism. This third viewpoint is therefore implied by MacIntyre's claim that Aquinas had access to a "mode of understanding more comprehensive than either tradition."[93]

To the extent that MacIntyre claims Aquinas does engage in a process of comparative evaluation between traditions, resulting in a "higher synthesis," this involves the adoption of an independent third viewpoint from which both traditions can be simultaneously assessed. Thus MacIntyre must revise those elements of his theory that give rise to his either/or dilemma. For instance, he must modify his requirement that all comparative evaluation must always take place within a single hermeneutic context, which in turn requires that he allow the possibility of dual occupation of two hermeneutic traditions simultaneously, and the inevitable concomitant that, short of complete commensurability between two traditions, this in turn allows comparative evaluation to take place from an independent, third viewpoint.[94] To simply retain the dualism of a first and second first language, where all evaluation must take place either within one or the other tradition, inevitably results in his either/or dilemma. The fact that, at various points MacIntyre himself implicitly assumes that such a third point is possible, suggests that it is implied, at a deeper level, by the requirements of his own analysis — even if it conflicts with his more formal

92. *Ibid*, p. 164.
93. *Ibid*, pp. 326-27 and 164-66.
94. This, in turn, requires that he modify his criticism of modern liberalism, where this criticism is premised on the fact that liberals have assumed precisely this capacity to evaluate competing traditions from a third, independent, or "neutral" viewpoint. *Ibid*, pp. 333-34 and 335.

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claims concerning the inescapability of evaluation from within the perspective of one tradition or another.

MacIntyre brilliantly attempts to respond to Enlightenment criticisms from a hermeneutic perspective by providing the possibility of "external" evaluation (thus moving beyond the self-referentiality of Taylor's BA principle or Rorty's "ethnocentrism") while still denying that such evaluation can take place from an "autonomous" viewpoint. But this model needs to be more aware of its own implicit requirements, since the need for this third view brings it closer to Enlightenment demands concerning autonomy in evaluation.

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Fascism and the Primacy of the Political

Dick Pels

Politics vs. Economics

One of the core convictions informing radical right-wing thought has been that politics should take precedence over economics and that the power question was more fundamental than the property question.[1] With the purpose of resolving the economic and cultural crisis, fascists and national socialists typically demanded a restoration of the primacy of the political and a repoliticization of economic life, which both liberal and Marxist theory had promoted to the status of an ontological "last instance." Speaking in March 1933, at the height of the political *Gleichschaltung* following the January coup, Hitler was characteristically straightforward about his intentions: "We want to restore the primacy of the political." In *Mein Kampf* (1924) he had already pleaded a reversal of the relation between economics and the state, advising that "industry and commerce recede from their unhealthy leading position and adjust themselves to the general framework of a national economy of balanced supply and demand." Capital was to remain "the handmaiden of the state" and not fancy itself "the mistress of the nation." A strong state was needed to act as "intelligence" and "organizer" of national production; economics was only one among its instruments and

1. See Herman Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Class in Germany 1914-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 219; Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism. Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar Germany and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 2, 4 and 227; Andrew Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992), p. 167. This article is part of a larger work, *Property or Power? A Study in Intellectual Rivalry* (forthcoming, 1998), dealing with the long-standing rivalry between "property theory" and "power theory" in Western thought.

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could never be its cause or aim.[2]

In their famous 1932 encyclopedia article "The Doctrine of Fascism," Mussolini and Gentile likewise asserted that "everything is in the state and nothing human or spiritual exists, much less has value, outside the state." In a broadside against both liberalism and historical materialism, they added that it was absurd to maintain that "economic improvements" sufficed to explain human history to the exclusion of all other factors. It was the totalitarian State, embodying the conscience and ethical will of all citizens, which was called upon to organize the Nation and thus logically also "claimed for itself the field of economics."[3] Gentile's neo-idealism, while advocating a reversal of Marx back toward Hegel, delineated the all-powerful state as both the highest embodiment of the citizens' ethical consciousness and economic activity as essentially subordinate to this ethical force. While liberals and Marxists had accepted economic principles as abstract, universally applicable laws, only fascist corporate economists had recognized that they should be controlled and regulated from a higher ethical-political viewpoint.[4]

This self-image has to some extent been ratified by outside observers, both neutral and inimical. The postwar political sociology of totalitarian regimes characteristically has operated from the assumption, in Talmon's words, that totalitarianism "recognizes ultimately only one plane of existence, the political," and tends to widen the scope of politics to embrace the whole of human existence.[5] Neo-Marxist theories of fascism,[6] in relaxing the rigid hold of the reductionary "iron guard of capital" interpretation, have likewise acknowledged the primacy of the political in fascist

2. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, ed. by D. C. Watt (London: Hutchinson, 1969), pp. 127, 137 and 190. See also Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978), p. 138.

3. Benito Mussolini and Giovanni Gentile, "The Doctrine of Fascism," in Adrian Lyttleton, ed., *Italian Fascisms. From Pareto to Gentile* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 41-43, 48, 55-56.

4. H. S. Harris, *The Social Philosophy of Giovanni Gentile* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), pp. 46-49, 234, 235.

5. J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Sphere Books, 1970), p. 2.

6. Friedrich Pollock, "Ist der Nationalsozialismus eine neue Ordnung?" [1941], in Helmut Dubiel and Alfons Söllner, eds., *Wirtschaft, Recht, und Staat im Nationalsozialismus. Analysen des Instituts für Sozialforschung 1939-1942* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1981), p. 118. See also Franz Neumann's trajectory from his rather traditionally designed *Behemoth* (1942) to *The Democratic and the Authoritarian State* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 257ff., where there is more room for the autonomy, if not for the outright primacy of the political over the economic.

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regimes, although under the sign of an expanded concept of economic determination in the "last" instance. In an early (1941) analysis of the national socialist regime as a form of state capitalism, Friedrich Pollock argued that the Third Reich was presently constructing a new economic order "in which market was replaced by command." Poulantzas' subsequent elaboration of the Marxian model of "Bonapartism" similarly emphasized the enhanced autonomy of the political *vis-à-vis* the economic sphere.[7] In an equally influential work, Mason explained the political disenfranchisement of the propertied classes and the ensuing "primacy of politics" in National Socialist Germany as necessarily ensuing from the inability of "capital" to bring about the recovery of the economy and the reproduction of civil society, which required a strong government to forge a new social and economic compromise.[8]

To take fascism and National Socialism seriously as intellectual systems, however, let alone to take fascist professions of continuity with specific varieties of socialism seriously, remains a hotly contested "revisionist" view which many students of the radical Right consider dangerously close to euphemizing a politics of irrationalism and radical evil. Traditionally, fascist ideologues could not be taken "at their word," since even the smallest suspicion of their alleged "rationality" engendered revulsion and unease; that fascist movements were anti-spiritual, that their sparse ideas were only negative and that, on balance, ideology did not carry much weight, long remained common conviction to both laymen and expert historians.[9] In the present context, this long-standing conviction easily translates into the claim that the "primacy of the political" did not constitute an intellectual conviction worthy of substantive analysis but constituted no more than the specious signature of an irrational and inexhaustible scramble for power.

Since the early 1960s, however, "revisionist" political historians such as Stern, Nolte, Gregor and Sternhell have begun to recognize that fascism did indeed feature a complex, systematic and coherent ideological doctrine,

7. Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London: New Left Books, 1974).

8. Tim Mason, "The Primacy of Politics — Politics and Economics in National Socialist Germany" (1969), in his *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

9. See Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 14; Dick Pels, "The Dark Side of Socialism. Hendrik de Man and the Fascist Temptation," in *History of the Human Sciences* (May 1993), Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 65-95. According to A. J. Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 96, "Of all the folk wisdom surrounding Fascism, the conviction that it was no more than opportunistic, anti-ideological, antirational and consequently devoid of programmatic and strategic content, is both significantly untrue and most difficult to dispel."

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which reflected a respectable historical ancestry and was decisive for practical politics. Accordingly, fascist ideology was not nihilistic but founded on authentic forms of intellectual idealism. Neither was it conservative, at least not in the traditional sense; it represented an authentic revolutionary impulse.[10] Intellectual historians are also increasingly acknowledging that fascism provided reasonably coherent answers to evident weaknesses, gaps and paradoxes in rival ideologies such as liberalism and socialism — especially in its Marxist and anarchist variants. Perhaps this critical relation has been especially close with Marxism, which fascist and national socialist thinkers consistently targeted as their most formidable competitor. Apart from elaborating an extended critique of Marxist scientific rationalism, fascist ideologues also cornered defects in its theory about the role of political elites and cultural leadership, and criticized the silences and biases in its concepts of social class (specifically concerning the position of the alienated middle classes and the peasantry) in its theory about national sentiment and in its concepts of political power and the state. So far, however, fascism has hardly been given a serious hearing as a theoretical competitor of Marxism, or as an ideology which was pitched at an intellectual level comparable to its rival. It is still rare, in this context, to acknowledge the intellectual failures of socialism and Marxism themselves, and the concomitant attractions which were exercised by the counter-ideology of fascism.

The Fascist Equation

Writing in 1933, both as a former syndicalist Marxist and as the most prestigious political scientist of the Mussolini regime, Robert Michels outlined the relation between Marxism and fascism as follows: "Fascism cannot be comprehensively understood without an understanding of Marxism. This is true not only because contemporary phenomena cannot be adequately understood without a knowledge of the facts that preceded them in time (and with which they are linked dialectically), but also because of the points of contact which, in spite of everything, remain. That which, to its advantage, distinguishes Italian Fascism from German National Socialism, is its painful passage through the purgatory of the socialist system, with its impressive heritage of scientific and philosophical thought from Saint-Simon through Marx and Sorel."[11]

Leading thinkers of the "Conservative Revolution" in Weimar Germany

10. Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

11. A. J. Gregor, *Young Mussolini and the Intellectual Origins of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 1.

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chose to picture their indebtedness to Marxist thought in more agonistic terms. Moeller van den Bruck, author of the prophetic *Das dritte Reich* (1923), claimed to counter internationalist, democratic and proletarian socialism by a truly "German" socialism, which was to be nationalist, elitist and authoritarian in inspiration; it would hence "begin where Marxism ended" in order to eliminate all traces of liberalism in the spiritual history of mankind.[12] Hans Freyer, a well-known sociologist and author of the influential pamphlet *Revolution von Rechts*, suggested that the very demise of the revolution of the Left was presently creating room for a revolution from the Right; this *völkische* revolution, directed by the State as its conscious and organizational vanguard, would finally emancipate the State from its century-long entwinement in societal interests.[13] In the preface to his synoptic pro-Nazi work, *Deutscher Sozialismus*, Werner Sombart, while recommending an intimate knowledge of Marxism as an "ineluctable demand" for any participant in politics, considered it his duty "to direct the apparently strong forces that work for a completion of the national socialist idea in its socialist aspect."[14]

In Weimar Germany, as in France and Italy before WWI, revolutionary conservatism thus partly developed through a critical confrontation with and digestion of Marxist socialism, which one way or the other counted among the most significant cultural roots of fascist ideology. Under this aspect, fascism can be truthfully described as socialism's "dark side." Anticipated by Burnham and Hayek,[15] this thesis about the peculiar relation between Marxism and fascism is encountered in contemporary historical disputes with different shades of emphasis. For Nolte, fascism represents a radical counter-ideology, which in its "hostile proximity" remains deeply indebted to its polar opposite. In his familiar definition, fascism is "anti-Marxism which seeks to destroy the enemy by the evolvement of a radically opposed and yet related ideology and by the use of almost identical and yet typically modified methods, always however, within the unyielding framework of national self-assertion and

12. Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, *op. cit.*, p. 276; Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *National-Bolschewismus in Deutschland 1918-1933* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1972), p. 35.

13. Hans Freyer, *Revolution von Rechts* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1931), pp. 55, 61.

14. Werner Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus* (Berlin: Buchholz & Weisswange, 1934), pp. xiii and xvi.

15. James Burnham, *The Managerial Revolution* (Harmondswoth: Penguin Books, 1945 [1941]); F. A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986 [1944]), pp. 124ff.

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autonomy."[16] For Gregor, fascism represents not so much a reversal of Marxism as a radical *heresy* emerging from crisis-ridden classical Marxism, which "was sufficiently vague and porous to accommodate all the theoretical elements later put together by Mussolini and the first Fascists to fashion their revolutionary ideology." Along with many others in his political environment, the young Mussolini was a Marxist intellectual heretic who should be taken seriously in that capacity. Indeed, fascism itself should be taken seriously as "a variant of classical Marxism" rather than as its metaphysical opposite.[17]

Sternhell has carved out a position that mediates between the opposite exaggerations of Nolte and Gregor. According to him, fascism neither constitutes the "long shadow" or mirror image of Marxism, nor can it be simply seen as one of its heretical branches. The "fascist equation," instead, emerges from the *synthesis* of a specific anti-rationalist and anti-materialist revision of Marxism (the anarcho-syndicalist school of Sorel, Lagardelle, Michels, Berth and others) and of a newly developed "integral" and revolutionary *nationalism*, elaborated in France by Barrès, Maurras and Valois and in Italy by former syndicalists such as Labriola, Panunzio, Corradini, Michels and Mussolini. In this respect, a *revision* of Marxism in a revolutionary syndicalist direction (or a "revolutionary revisionism," as Michels termed it) formed at least *one* of the two crucial tributaries to ideological fascism.[18] This "revolutionary revisionism" considered itself anti-bourgeois, anti-parliamentarian and anti-party, glorifying a revolutionary spirit of combat without privileging the proletariat as world-historical actor. It embraced socialism less as an outcome of objectively determined economic coordination than as a matter of ethical choice; and it squarely acknowledged the "authoritarian" fact of leadership by political intellectuals, grounding its utopian expectations on a novel union between this radical managerial intelligentsia and the broad ranks of the "people" or "nation."

Fascist ideology thus emerged, at least in part, from a novel confluence of Marxism and anarchism, or more precisely: from an anarcho-syndicalist revision of Marxist orthodoxy which increasingly distanced itself

16. Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, 1965), p. 40.

17. A. J. Gregor, *Young Mussolini*, *op. cit.*, p. xi. See also his *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

18. Zeev Sternhell, *Neither Right nor Left: Fascist Ideology in France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Zeev Sternhell (with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri), *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

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from the latter's economistic, deterministic and egalitarian premises. French revolutionary syndicalism always placed more emphasis on the role of ethical sentiment and political will, on myth and intuition, and on the autonomy of intellectual and political elites; its Italian counterpart, drifting away even further from classical anarchist principles, gradually accentuated authoritarian notions about revolutionary organization, discipline and vanguard leadership, while simultaneously exchanging traditional internationalist views for a closer recognition of the irrepressible fact of nationality. In the first decade of the present century, syndicalists such as Panunzio, Olivetti and Michels, invoking Engels' familiar remarks on the necessity of authority for all types of social organization, came to describe revolutionary syndicalism as essentially "authoritarian" in character and the syndicalist elite as a "new aristocracy" charged with the historic mission of educating the passive working masses toward a new moral and political consciousness. By 1909, Michels advanced the notion of an "iron law of elites," arising from the necessity of organizing for group and class conflicts, especially of a revolutionary nature.[19] In the same vein, Mussolini called Pareto's theory of elites "perhaps the most ingenuous sociological conception of modern times," and went on to describe himself as an "authoritarian" and "aristocratic" socialist.[20]

In a further development, dominated by the experiences of war and economic crisis in an industrially backward nation such as Italy, the syndicalist emphasis on the role of revolutionary elites substituting for an absent or immature proletariat was blended with a growing emphasis on the priority of developing the forces of production within the national framework. This emphasis, if stamped with the revolutionary urgency constitutive of syndicalist ideology, logically led to a reinforced "nationalization" and "statization" of its framework of analysis, which finally overturned what still remained of anarchist anti-authoritarian principles. Italy, to the syndicalists, was a "proletarian nation" which had first to traverse the stage of industrial development and throw off the tutelage of the more advanced capitalist nations before it was able to complete something like a Marxian revolution. What was needed was a strong "developmental" state that would harmonize the classes and organize a productivist revolution from above.[21]

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19. See Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47ff.
20. Gregor, *Young Mussolini*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47 and 57.
21. L. Rosenstock-Franck, *L'Économie corporatiste fasciste en doctrine et en fait* (Paris: Camber, 1934), pp. 16ff; Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83ff. and 113ff.

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Pioneered in Italy by Corradini, Panunzio and Michels, this "proletarian nationalism" or "state syndicalism," by proclaiming an end to the disruptive class war and seeking the "total mobilization" of all productive forces in the nation under the guidance of a dynamic, innovatory and entrepreneurial state, subsequently re-emerged both in "conservative revolutionary" and "national Bolshevik" thought in Weimar Germany and in that of Belgian and French *néosocialisme*. In claiming the sovereignty of state politics over economic production, "national socialism," in this specific "developmental" version, simultaneously affirmed the primacy of the political and conceded the essentially secondary nature of the property question; property rights were henceforth defined as socially functional and contingent upon the demands of state-directed economic development. Not surprisingly, fascism's comparative "leniency" toward private property was precisely the master criterion which its Marxist adversaries required in order to "prove" its essentially reactionary nature as a handmaiden of capitalism.[22] Anarchism, of course, had been dismissed as a "petty-bourgeois luxury" on precisely the same ground.

"German Socialism" as Power Theory

It is a curious coincidence that one of the most detailed and influential polemics written against state socialist views by the founders of historical materialism can be plausibly read as an anticipatory critique of the fascist and national socialist affirmation of the primacy of the political. This polemic was directed against the "German socialism" of Eugen-Karl Dühring and written by Engels in 1877-78 in order to combat the growing influence of the former's ideas in the socialist movement of his day. A Berlin philosopher and economist, Dühring combined a defence of free competition with the notion of creating a strong national state expressive of the general will of the German *Volk*, which would establish an autarkic political economy and supervise a nationalized culture built on class harmony. This "German socialism"[23] was

22. Representative of this view is, e.g., Ralph Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* (London: Quartet Books, 1973), p. 81, which critically quotes Mussolini's 1934 Senate speech: "The corporatist economy respects the principle of private property. Private property completes the human personality. It is a right. But it is also a duty. We think that property ought to be regarded as a social function; we wish therefore to encourage not passive property, but active property, which does not confine itself to enjoying wealth, but develops it and increases it." Mussolini here only repeats a view typical of the entire tradition of Sorelian revolutionary syndicalism. A Marxist historian such as Sternhell still fastens on this "lenient" stance on property as primary criterion of (negative) judgment.

23. See Robert Michels, *Masse, Führer, Intellektuelle. Politisch-Soziologische Aufsätze 1906-1933* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 1987), pp. 128-29; and George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 131-32 and 277.

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strongly contrasted with the "Jewish" socialism of Marx and his associates.

Dühring, of course, is one among the select array of thinkers who seems solely remembered today because Marx and Engels at one time considered it worth their while to consign to the scrapheap of intellectual history.[24] While major figures such as Stirner and Proudhon have meanwhile successfully shaken off this Marxian shadow, Dühring is still almost exclusively known through the abbreviated title of Engels' exhaustively and consistently malevolent *Anti-Dühring*. His views are only briefly outlined here because his vision of a nationalist and state-directed "German" socialism largely anticipated the revolutionary-conservative thinking as it emerged from the ordeal of the Great War and the intellectual ferment of Weimar in the 1920s and early 1930s. In the wartime and postwar writings of Plenge, Sombart, Spengler, Jünger, Freyer and Schmitt, much of the debate with Marxism was once again condensed in the analytical dilemma about the subordination of the political *vis-à-vis* the economic. A considerable part of Engels' polemic against Dühring was likewise devoted to a critical dissection of the latter's "theory of force," seeking to reverse his conviction that the constitution of political relations was historically fundamental and that economic dependencies were only an effect or a special case and hence invariably constituted "facts of secondary importance." Some of the newer socialist systems, Dühring stated, had totally reversed the order of priority by deriving political phenomena from economic conditions. Although such secondary, retroactive effects were indeed present, the primitive fact had to be located in immediate political force and not in indirect economic power. The original "fall from grace," when Robinson Crusoe enslaved Friday, from which all subsequent history took its departure, was an act of force; and all property was therefore *Gewalteigentum*, since it rested upon this original act of political subjection.[25]

Dühring's own example, Engels riposted, clearly demonstrated that force was only the means, while economic advantage (the surplus labor extracted from Friday) constituted the end; which made the economic aspect of the relation historically more fundamental than the political one. In order to enslave Friday, Robinson Crusoe had to dispose of the tools

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24. An exception is Haselbach's reading of Dühring as a precursor of the "liberal socialism" of Oppenheimer and Nelson. See Dieter Haselbach, *Franz Oppenheimer. Soziologie, Geschichtsphilosophie und Politik des "Liberalen Sozialismus"* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1988).

25. Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Umwälzung der Wissenschaft*, in *Marx-Engels Werke* Vol. 20 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972 [1878]), p. 147.

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and material objects of labor as well as the means for the slave's own subsistence, which presupposed a certain level of productivity and distributive inequality. In this fashion, Dühring stood the entire relation on its head. Everywhere private property emerged from changes in relations of production and exchange in which the role of force did not enter. The entire necessary movement toward monopolization of the means of production and subsistence in the hands of a restricted class and the attendant demotion of the vast majority to the status of propertyless proletarians could be explained from purely economic causes without having to invoke phenomena such as theft, force, state action or any other kind of political involvement. Force remained universally dependent upon Money, which could only be generated by economic production; it was the economic situation which ultimately furnished Force with the equipment it required.[26]

If Dühring, as Michels later reported,[27] was temporarily "buried alive" by Engels' massive polemic, it would not be long before ideas closely resembling his *völkische* socialism caught the imagination of an entire generation of German "anti-intellectual" and anti-Marxist intellectuals. From around 1910, but especially spurred by the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, authors such as Sombart, Plenge, Spengler, Jünger, Van den Bruck, Freyer and Schmitt were to crystallize similar ideas into what became known as the "German socialism" of the "Conservative Revolution."[28] Roughly a decade after the incubation period of Italian national syndicalism, the "conservative revolutionaries" reinvented and deepened in all important

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 148-52, 166-71 and 154-55.

27. Michels, *Masse, Führer, Intellektuelle*, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

28. Lebovics, *Social Conservatism*, *op. cit.*, p. 219; Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37; Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), p. 59ff. Breuer has recently questioned whether the Conservative Revolution constitutes a clearly definable group sharing a minimum of common themes, aims and methods. Given the issue at hand, however, his deconstructive effort seems to fail, insofar as all the authors discussed at least tend to acknowledge this primacy of the political over the economic. Breuer judiciously demonstrates the large intellectual distance between 'rightwingers' such as Spengler and Moeller van den Bruck, who insisted upon preserving private property and entrepreneurial discretion and 'leftwingers' such as Jünger and Niekisch, who pleaded a form of state socialism. However, a case can be made that the issue of balancing politically functionalized property rights against the supreme rights of an organizing, planning state was common ground to the conservative-revolutionary Left, Right and Center. As is clear from Breuer's own material, while the "National-Bolshevik" tendency never went as far as advocating an integral "abolition" or collectivization of private property, the "national-liberal" tendency never disputed its political functionalization. The use of the term "socialism" in, e.g., "German socialism," is therefore less a matter of "conceptual confusion" than Breuer indicates (pp. 59-70). See also fn. 39 on the "mediating" position of *Die Tat*.

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respects its conceptual merger of intransigent nationalism and radical anti-capitalism. The "primacy of the political over the economic" stood out as one major common theme. Thus, in *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (1911), Sombart, already renowned as a left-wing sociologist and historian of capitalism, expounded the view that the primacy of the economy over all other spheres of social life had been the special contribution of the "Jewish spirit."[29] The capitalist domination of money and abstraction was Jewish in its essence; Jews represented everything that was universal, rootless, international and abstract in contrast to all that was local, rooted, nationalist and concrete. Two souls, in fact, lived in the breast of the capitalist entrepreneur: the "German" one of dynamic risk-taking and rational planning of production and the "Jewish" one of calculating for financial gain. While the "German" entrepreneur was an inventor, organizer and leader, "a hero of production," the "Jewish" merchant was exclusively interested in commercial profit and remained indifferent to the product itself.

Sombart's wartime pamphlet *Händler und Helden* (1915) extrapolated this opposition between the spirit of commercialism and the spirit of organization — and between the exemplary types of economic and political man — to the national contest between Germany, a nation of social order and political hierarchy, and England, the historical guardian of the merchant capitalist spirit. English commercial civilization had to be countered by the "German idea of the state," as pioneered by Fichte, Lassalle and Rodbertus, which requested subordination of individual interests to the higher interests of the popular community.[30] The outbreak of the war had triggered a broad stream of patriotic polemics revolving around what Johann Plenge, a neo-Hegelian sociologist, had influentially styled the "Ideas of 1914." 1789 and 1914 symbolized the two grand principles in the history of political thought battling for pre-eminence: the ideal of individual freedom, which was the essence of liberal capitalism, and the ideal of social organization, which constituted the essence of socialism. Whereas the 19th century had been an atomized, critical and disorganized century, the 20th century was to be dominated by the idea of "German organization," which was commissioned to establish the popular community of a national socialism. In *Der Krieg und die Volkswirtschaft* (1915)

29. See Herf, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-37. On Sombart, see Friedrich Lenger, *Werner Sombart 1863-1941. Eine Biographie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1994). Lenger shows how Sombart anticipated all the main themes of the revisionist critique of Marx and embraced a brand of reformist state socialism which enabled him gradually to "cross over" to autarkic "German" socialism. The latter strongly influenced the ideologists of the Conservative Revolution.

30. Herf, *op. cit.*, p. 144; Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

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Plenge, like Sombart, extrapolated the opposition between capitalism and socialism toward the war of the West against Germany; first realized as a war economy, German socialism would consolidate a state-regulated *Volkswirtschaft* after the inspirational example of Fichte's "closed commercial state." It was high time to recognize that "socialism must be power policy, because it is to be organization. Socialism has to win power, never blindly destroy it."[31]

Spengler's *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (1919) was perhaps the most stirring conservative-revolutionary call to arms issuing from this wartime intellectual ferment. Like Sombart and Plenge, he divined an implacable opposition between the "English" liberal spirit of society, profit and competition and the "Prussian" instinct of order, community, hierarchy, duty and labor. This opposition had unfolded into a heroic life-or-death clash between two dominating "world ideas": the dictatorship of money and that of organization, which defined the world alternatively "as booty or as state, wealth or authority, success or profession." Would in the future, Spengler rhetorically asked, "commerce govern the state or the state govern commerce?"[32] To decide this issue, German socialism had to be liberated from Marx, who had merely invented a kind of "inverted capitalism," and install an authoritarian socialism — a socialism of the civil servant and the organizer, which was prepared to use to the full the economic authority of the state. The essence of socialism did not reside in the opposition between rich and poor, but in the fact that rank, performance and competence would rule life. In Spengler's projected state corporatism, property would not be seen as private booty but as a procuration of the whole community; not as an expression and means of personal power but as a trust or fief for which the proprietor owed accountability to the state. In this respect, socialization was not so much a matter of nominal possession but of technique of administration. Socialism, in brief, meant "power, power and yet again power. Plans and thoughts are nothing without power."[33]

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31. Cited in Hayek, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-28.

32. Oswald Spengler, "Preussentum und Sozialismus," in *Politische Schriften* (Munich and Berlin: Beck, 1934), pp. 69, 103.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49, 92-95 and 105. Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, part I (1918) bristles with statements announcing an apocalyptic struggle between "power" and "money," resulting in the inevitable triumph of the former. In this battle, the powers of a dictatorial money economy stand against the "purely political will toward order" of a new authoritarian state. Politics rather than economics is decisive; hence, a new primacy of politics over the economy will emerge. See Herf, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58 and 62; Frits Boterman, *Oswald Spengler. Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1992).

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Freyer, Jünger, Sombart

Three other texts are worthy of attention here, since together they consolidated the intellectual framework of German socialism as a theory of power rather than one of property: Freyer's *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft im philosophischen Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts* (1921), Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* (1932) and Sombart's *Deutscher Sozialismus* (1934). Freyer's *Habilitationsschrift* fleshed out ideas about the commercial and "marketing" spirit of the 19th century, adopted from his teachers Plenge and Sombart, in a broadly conceived intellectual history of the "naturalization" or autonomization of the "economic" frame of mind. Liberal political economy and the socialist tradition shared the same basic concept of the abstract law-like autonomy and the primordial value of economic life, which Marx had even elevated into an ontologically grounded essence — a "cause of causes" in the interplay of cultural moments.[34] With the avowed purpose of reframing this economic rationalism in a new communitarian ethics and politics of the people state, Freyer invoked the Romantic tradition of national economy, especially Adam Müller's *Elemente der Staatskunst*, whose idea of a corporatist *Volkswirtschaft*, in which each function partook of "the spiritual whole of the politicized economy," had received further elaboration at the hands of authors such as List, Rodbertus, Hildebrand and Schäffle. "Economic life," Freyer summed up, "is not necessarily the commercial contest of atomized interests, which it is at present. It is a spiritual concern of the state community."[35] Recently this tradition of historical, ethical (and truly political) economy had tended more strongly in a state socialist direction. Extrapolating this trend, Freyer harmonized this tradition's shared neo-Hegelian concept of the ethical state with that of *völkische* political nationalism by identifying it as "the acme, in which the people become historical," both anticipating his subsequent laudation of the state as the ultimate perfection of spiritual development in *Der Staat* (1926) and his ringing expression about the state as "the politicized people" in *Revolution von Rechts* (1931).[36]

34. Hans Freyer, *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft im philosophischen Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: George Olms, 1966 [1921]), pp. 75-75 and 94. See also Jerry Z. Muller, *The Other God that Failed. Hans Freyer and the Deradicalization of German Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 81ff.

35. Freyer, *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37ff, 51.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 119. "The economy is recalcitrant and must be taken in stronger hand, both in order to subordinate it to the organized people as its collective work and to serve as a set of instruments for its new political subject. Never has the tension between the political principle of formation and the content to be formed been stronger as in this case. That is why this tension with the forming force must be raised to the maximum (*auf starkste angezogen werden*)." See Hans Freyer, *Der Staat* (Leipzig: Ernst Wiegandt, 1926), p. 177.

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Following Spengler and Sombart, at the beginning of the 1930s Jünger developed a spectacular metaphysic of war, discipline and total mobilization which has accurately been described as a "conservative anarchism."[37] His portentous essay "Die totale Mobilmachung" (1930) and his book *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (1932) — which carried a memorable dedication to Spengler — became foundational for National Bolshevik tendencies as formulated by his friend Niekisch, for younger conservative revolutionaries around the journal *Die Tat* and for the "left-wing" national socialist tendency represented by the young Goebbels and the Strasser brothers within the NSDAP. Developing earlier suggestions by Plenge and Moeller van den Bruck, these circles saw the insurrection of "young," "proletarian" nations such as Soviet Russia and Germany against the "old" capitalist powers as requiring a national and autarkic "war socialism" geared toward a total mobilization of all of the nation's human and material resources. Germany's military defeat, Moeller van den Bruck had argued after Versailles, should be exploited as an "educational" challenge. Since, like the proletariat, Germany now possessed little more than its chains, it should not fear the coming world revolution, but could spearhead the war of liberation of the expropriated nations against the world bourgeoisie. Jünger, Niekisch, Edgar Jung, the *Tatkreis* intellectuals[38] and the Strasserites within (and soon to be drummed out of) the NSDAP all echoed this alarming conversion of the Marxist idea of the economic alienation of the proletariat into that of the spiritual-political contamination of the nation.

Reversing Rathenau's dictum that, in the modern world, not politics but economics had acquired the force of fate, Jünger outlined a universal trend toward state-directed mobilization and planned organization of economic life, which forced everyone and everything into the harsh mold of

37. Hans Peter Schwartz, *Der Konservative Anarchist. Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1962)

38. Schüddekopf, *National-Bolshewismus in Deutschland*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 254. The importance of *Die Tat* is not only suggested by the journal's unprecedented circulation in the early 1930s, far exceeding the readership of any other competitor on the intellectual Right (an estimated 30,000 copies in 1932 and most probably more than one reader per copy), but also by the fact that it successfully "centered" itself between the "rightwing" and the "leftwing" limits of the Conservative Revolution, as demarcated by Spengler's nostalgic Prussianism and Niekisch's National Bolshevism; as such offering an attractive platform for the more "centrist" convictions of major intellectuals such as Sombart, Freyer and Schmit. See Lebovics, *op. cit.*, pp. 172 and 210; Kurt Sontheimer, "Der Tatkreis," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (July 1959), Vol. 7, No. 3.

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an all-enveloping logic of power.[39] It was instructive to notice, for instance, that in the Soviet planning experiment the economic mode of thinking had superseded itself and evolved into an outright deployment of power. The world war had essentially been a gigantic labor process, fusing the Warrior and the Worker into a single form, which sharply contrasted with that of the bourgeois, the typical representative of liberal disorganization.[40] Editors of *Die Tat* such as Fried and Wirsing likewise emphasized this inevitable drive toward state organization of economic life in terms of an autarkic planned economy, which was prefigured in the war economy but remained imperative in order to shield Germany from the havoc of a collapsing world economy. By pressing the economy into its service, the state would simultaneously "grow together" with the working masses and, in fusing state and people, it would realize the perfection of democracy. In this new frame of things, the place of economic science would once again be taken by the political sciences.[41]

Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* (1932) further detailed the worker-soldier as the archetypal "political man" and torchbearer of a totalitarian industrial dictatorship, over against the liberal and Marxist conception of the worker as "product of industry" and a merely "economic quality."[42] The emancipation of the laborer from the economic world implied his subordination to a higher law of struggle. It meant that the pivotal point of the worker's insurrection was neither economic freedom nor economic power, but power as such. In contrast with the security-minded bourgeois, the worker enjoyed "a new relation with the elementary, with freedom and power;" the will to power was the truest representation of his form.[43] Property and

39. In *The Concept of the Political*, Carl Schmitt provided the following typical reaction to Rathenau's statement: "It would be more exact to say that politics continues to remain the destiny, but what has occurred is that economics has become political and thereby the destiny." See his *The Concept of the Political*, ed. by George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1932]), p. 78. In 1917, Rathenau himself had already written: "Now, at the beginning of the second year of the war, the realization that all economic life is based on the state is fading, that state politics precedes business activity, that anyone who has property and can obtain it is indebted to everyone." See his *Von Kommenden Dingen* (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1917), p. 89.

40. Ernst Jünger, "Die totale Mobilmachung," in *Werke* Vol. 5 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, n.d.), pp. 132 and 140.

41. Ferdinand Fried, *Das Ende des Kapitalismus* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1931), p. 23.

42. According to Herf, *op. cit.*, p. 92, Jünger's figure of the worker-soldier offered "one of the most enduring of reactionary modernist symbols"

43. Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1932), pp. 28, 34 and 70.

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labor power stood under state protection and hence were essentially limited in their freedom of movement. Indeed, "in terms of an investigation of the worker" the question of private property was much less interesting than current ideology presumed. Different from the world of liberal economy, it did matter much less in the world of labor whether property was considered moral or immoral; what counted was whether it could be included into a general labor plan. More important was the manner in which the state instituted and circumscribed property as a subordinate fact; its value would rather be assessed in terms of its contribution to the realization of total mobilization, or what Jünger synonymically referred to as the mobilization of labor.[44]

Speaking around the same time at the Fascist Congress of Corporations at Ferrara, Sombart once again summed up what had become the central credo of the Conservative Revolution: that the previous century had been the century of economics, in which economic interests weighed heavier than all other factors of culture, but that the future was going to be a political epoch, in which politics would once again reign supreme.[45] Sombart's *Deutscher Sozialismus*, published a year after the Hitler coup, was similarly written as a comprehensive indictment of the primacy of the economic as the most essentially negative characteristic of the time. Repeating and systematizing all the major themes developed over the decade by himself and other writers of the radical Right, he insisted that economic rationalization had conjured up the triple disease of intellectualization, objectification and uniformity. Bourgeois class formation, the proletarian class struggle and hence also proletarian socialism were actually "true children of the economic age": Marx's metaphysics of history incorrectly generalized this

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-747, 274-75, 284. See Schmitt's consideration of the claim of the fascist state to act as a "dominant" or "neutral third," rather than as a servant of economic or social interests. Only a weak state, he argued, remained the servant of private property. Every strong state demonstrated its strength not against the weak but against the economically and socially strong. Hence the entrepreneurial class could never fully trust the fascist state, which tended to develop "in the direction of a workers' state with a planned economy." See Carl Schmitt, *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1988), pp. 113-14. In 1931, he explicitly picked up Jünger's notion of "total mobilization" in order to describe the turn toward the (potentially) total state and its tendency to identify state and society. *Ibid.*, p. 152; *Der Hüter der Verfassung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931), p. 79. Freyer curiously wedded Jünger and Schmitt in describing Machiavelli's view of the Roman battle order as symbolizing a people "capable of joining together in an emergency and of total mobilization in a crisis," adding in conclusion that "the ideal constitution is the people armed." *Preussentum und Aufklärung und Andere Studien zu Ethik und Politik*, ed. by Elfriede Üner (Weinheim: VCH, 1986), p. 179.

45. Michaïl Manoïlescu, *Le Siècle du Corporatisme* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1934), p. 42.

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particularity of the economic into a defining characteristic of human history. Meanwhile the "idea of the state" had gradually faded away and finally disappeared. German socialism was therefore nothing other than "the renunciation of the economic age in its totality." Because it targeted the general spirit of this age, it was far more radical than other movements. While proletarian socialism, more specifically, was only "capitalism with a negative sign," German socialism was truly anti-capitalist.[46]

After much preliminary footwork, Sombart went on to identify socialism as a "social normativism" set over against the "social naturalism" of economizing thought, explaining that obligatory norms originated from the "general reason" rooted in the political community as represented by its state. Socialism was hence not confined to the economy, but had to be understood as "the total order of the German people," a total ordering of all sectors of culture born from a uniform spirit and issuing from a single center. Because this popular socialism realized itself within the national framework, the only powers which were able to carry it through were state powers. Invoking the heritage of Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Rodbertus and Lassalle, Sombart consequently insisted on the need for a strong state which would govern a corporate, organic and hierarchical social order which recognized the primacy of the political.[47] The planned economy of German socialism would be at once comprehensive, single-minded and differentiated. The private economy would not need to be liquidated, as long as it was incorporated in a larger meaningful whole directed by the popular will embodied in the state. The property question, Sombart stipulated, was indeed "not an independent issue" for German socialism. For it, the bitterly embattled alternative of private vs. communal property did not exist. Private property was not unlimited in scope, but remained socially committed after the model of feudal tenure.[48] The core issue was that property rights no longer determined the foundations of economic activity, but that the (political) foundations of economic activity henceforth determined the scope and character of property rights.[49]

Dialectics of the Political: Schmitt and Others

In their totalizing conceptualizations of power, the political and the state, ideologists of the radical Right tended to retain a cognitive pattern typical of

46. Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-1, 24, 43, 112 and 160.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 219ff, and 224.
48. Sombart here adopted Spann's view that, formally, there was no private property but only communal property.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

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the intellectual systems they sought to reverse: the dialectic of the "last instance." The subtle Marxist scenario of over-determined reciprocity remained in place, resulting in a dialectic of constitution which similarly articulated the social whole into relatively autonomous spheres, even if the status of ontological "category of origin" now fell on the political. Curiously, this reversed dialectic derived as much from a politicized recapitulation of the Hegelian notion of the ethical state, interpreted as the culmination of the entire idealist tradition, as nourished by a duly collectivized and nationalized version of Nietzsche's will to power. If the Conservative Revolution was virtually "unthinkable" without Nietzsche,[50] the work of Spengler, Freyer and Sombart — and, in the Italian context, that of Gentile, Spirito, Panunzio, Olivetti and Michels — was there to verify the enduring legacy and converging influence of the accredited father of the dialectic.

Appropriated by Moeller van den Bruck in his pioneering article "Nietzsche und der Sozialismus" (1919), the Nietzschean metaphysic of power also infiltrated Spengler's *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (1919) and its call for "hardness," for a class of "socialist supermen," and for "power, power and yet again power."[51] If Spengler could affirm, in the first part of *The Decline of the West* (1918), that "all of life is politics," the latter was again taken in the transcendental Nietzschean sense and closely identified with "life," "action," and "war;" while his concept of the "state" tendentially encompassed all human activity, the connecting tissue of its living whole, in the long tradition that connected Müller to Fichte and Hegel. For his part, Gentile was clear about adopting Mazzini's inclusive concept of the political "in that overall sense which is indistinguishable from morality, religion, or any other conception of life." As a totalitarian doctrine with its center of gravity in political matters, fascism was therefore not simply concerned with the political order but sought to encompass the nation's "will, thought and feelings." As supreme creator of rights and liberties, the power of the *stato etico* was coextensive with social order and constituted the individual's true moral reality; state and individual should accordingly be considered "inseparable terms of an essential synthesis."[52]

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50. Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), pp. 29 and 87. See also Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 128ff.

51. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-98.

52. Giovanni Gentile, "The Origins and Doctrine of Fascism," in Lyttleton, *Italian Fascisms*, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-302 and 306-307; Harris, *The Social Philosophy of Giovanni Gentile*, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

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Freyer's *Der Staat* (1926) laid out this political dialectic in terms of a world-historical progression of three stages directed by the development of objective Spirit, which he described as belief, style and state. The final stage, in which spirit took a "political turn," represented the ultimate telos and perfection of cultural development. Here spirit realized its ultimate objectification in the state, which would henceforth politicize all elements of culture; it was truly "the spirit of the age."[53] The stage of style, although it had proliferated the manifold expressions of human creativity, had not been able to unify them; the essential quality of the state, by contrast, was its ability to forge living humanity with all its forces into a unity. The world could only be changed through power, which remained "one of the integrative and formative forces of the human world." Power created form out of the flux of life and molded the individual into "a necessary link in the exalted whole of the Reich."[54] Freyer's totalizing concepts of power and domination found a clear resonance in Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* and many other writings of the radical Right.[55]

In subsequent work, such as the 1933 essay *Herrschaft, Planung und Technik*, Freyer not only repeated his criticism of the Marxist tendency to "shift the fact of domination toward the economic" and interpret it as a mere form of exploitation, but also explicitly drew on Max Weber's "realistic" account of the ubiquity of domination in all types of social organization.[56] In this essay he also specified that, unlike classical liberal (and presumably, Marxist) thought, structural differentiation and stratification could well originate from the state, which could even actively create new estates or classes with functions of domination, such as the *noblesse de robe* or a proprietory bourgeoisie. This emphasis was repeated in somewhat different form in "Das Politische als Problem der Philosophie" (1935), which lamented 19th-century philosophy's dogmatic "neutralization" of the political, pleading philosophical recognition of the fact that the political belonged to the essence and destiny of mankind, that it signified no less than mankind's "second creation." Virtually reversing the Marxist dialectics of economic constitution, Freyer intoned that the political was the true soil from which culture grew, adding in Hegelian fashion that the state constituted the "totality of the systems of the objective spirit," the sum

53. Freyer, *Der Staat*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 143. See also Muller, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
55. Breuer, *op. cit.*, pp. 96ff.
56. Hans Freyer, *Herrschaft, Planung, und Technik*, ed. by Elfriede Üner (Weinheim: VCH, 1987), pp. 31-33 and 65-66.

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of its own social articulations. These systems were "not just regulated or protected or historically represented by it, but *constituted* and brought into existence as its moments, even in their capacity as autonomous spheres."[57]

So far there has been hardly any mention of the major intellectual figure whose influential concept of the political[58] perhaps offered the most clear-cut example of this reversal of ontological terms.[59] Indeed, Schmitt's vivid defence of the autonomy of the political against liberal and Marxist "neutralizations" and "depoliticizations"[60] notoriously slipped into a far more offensive claim about the political as first and last constitutive instance, which acted as a totalizing force, even while the specificity of alternative instances was to some extent preserved. The political was essentially autonomous, not in the sense of marking out a new area laterally positioned *vis-à-vis* others (such as morality, culture, economics, or religion), but as a self-revealing essence not reducible to any one of them but that could operate in all. Because it was oriented toward the emergency or the state of exception, the specifically political distinction — between friend and enemy — marked the highest degree of intensity of a social association or dissociation. As a matter of tension rather than extension, it had no substance of its own; the specifically "political" might be reached from all areas as soon as indigenous conflicts were fueled into a high

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

58. As respectfully acknowledged by, e.g., Freyer, *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft*, *op. cit.*, p. 118; *Herschaft, Planung, und Technik*, *op*, *cit.*, p. 24; as well as by Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus*, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

59. Although Schmitt's being part of the Conservative Revolution is in dispute, there is ample reason to include him in this current of thought. See Joseph W. Bendersky, "Carl Schmitt and the Conservative Revolution," in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), pp. 27-42; Armin Mohler, "Carl Schmitt und die 'Konservative Revolution.' Unsystematische Beobachtungen," in Helmut Quartsch, ed., *Complexio Oppositorum. Über Carl Schmitt* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988); Jerry Z. Muller, "Carl Schmitt, Hans Freyer and the Radical Conservative Critique of Liberal Democracy in the Weimar Republic," in *History of Political Thought* (Winter 1991), Vol. 12, No. 4).

60. This neutralizing drive was once again primarily accounted for in terms of the progress of *economic* rationalism. Virtually reversing the Smithian materialist "four stages" theory and closely verging on Comte's idealistic three-stage theory, Schmitt pictured historical development as advancing through four stages: theological, metaphysical, moralist and economic, each of which identified a specific central area and a specific mentality of its leading elite. The 19th century was characterized as "essentially economistic," while the 20th was described as the "age of technology" which, by pushing the drift towards neutrality to its logical extreme, would (necessarily? dialectically?) reinstate the political. See Carl Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," in *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993); Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt. The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," in *Political Theory* (August 1992), Vol. 20 ,No. 3, pp. 438-440).

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degree of polarity. The political logic was hence always foundational and the political entity always the decisive entity, sovereign in the sense of being determinant in the decisive instance. The state was therefore the determinant condition of a people, "its status as such," the *societas perfecta* of this nether world.[61] In a democratically organized community, state and society mutually penetrated and fused, inaugurating the "total state" of the "identity between state and society," in which politically neutral areas ceased to exist. Even if "state-free" societal spheres were reconstituted, they were conditionally demarcated by the totalizing and functionalizing state.[62] As Schmitt declared, not only should one acknowledge that "the political" was "the total," but also that the decision about whether something is *unpolitical* invariably entails a *political* decision.[63]

Such theoretical preferences lent a peculiar significance to Schmitt's aperçu, in *The Concept of the Political*, with regard to the "19th century German tension of state and society, politics and economy." As backdrop to a rather specific critique of Oppenheimer's liberal sociology of the state, which emphatically reversed the Hegelian order of evaluation, this insight also appeared to have wider validity for interpreting similar reversals by anarchist, syndicalist and Marxist thinkers. While Hegel, as Schmitt explained, set the state as the realm of ethical perfection and objective reason high above society, Oppenheimer's radical liberalism instead privileged economic society as the sphere of peaceful justice and equal exchange, degrading the state as a region of violent immorality, "extra-economic" force, thievery and conquest. While the roles were reversed, the apotheosis remained.[64] Despite such unusual perceptiveness about "knowledge-political" rivalries between foundational concepts and intellectual systems, Schmitt himself, however, did not reflexively withdraw from the grand polemic and the grand binary but manifestly reinforced them by once again celebrating a grand apotheosis of the political.

Whereas, for Oppenheimer as for radical Marxists, the state would wither away and everything would become "societal" or "economic" —

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61. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-22, 26-27 and 44; *Positionen und Begriffe*, *op. cit.*, p. 186. See also Sombart, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

62. Here I disagree with De Wit's view that Schmitt's concept of the reconstitution of "state-free" domains was "surprisingly liberal in character." See Theo de Wit, *De onontkoombaarheid van de politiek* (Ubbergen: Pomppers, 1992), pp. 168, 489 and 491.

63. Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie* (Munich & Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1934 [1922]), p. 6; and *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1935), p. 17.

64. Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78.

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since both the liberal and the communist state coincided with the associated producers — everything would turn political in Schmitt's homogeneous people's state. The sovereignty of the economy (and of political economy as master science) was once again exchanged for the sovereignty of the political (and of political philosophy). This structural affinity turned Oppenheimer, Marx and Schmitt into "last instance" theorists with comparable ambitions: spokesmen who permitted themselves to be carried by "their" instances and by the science which lent them a socio-ontological primacy. Indeed, if a specific instance is claimed to be "sovereign," "decisive," or "inescapable," this is metonymically valid for the theory and the theorist that cultivate it as such.

The Intellectuals' Socialism of the Right

If for many intellectuals on the radical Right "the political" operated as a dialectical category of origin, allowing a permanent slippage between a partial, domanial concept and more totalizing and foundational ones, it also opened vast possibilities for what can be called the "metonymic fallacy of the intellectuals."[65] As radical spokesmen for the higher interests of state sovereignty, national homogeneity and cultural identity, the political intellectuals of the Right consistently insinuated their partial concerns into their missionary definitions of the "general will" and the world-historical project of the nation. The identitarian dialectic of power reflected their aspiration to emerge as the "part" that would empower the "whole"; it enabled them to read their own desired fate (to be prime movers and final causes of social action) into the objective hierarchy and causality of the world. The logic of substitution, according to which the people was defined as coming to reflexive self-consciousness in its state, also reflected a politics of knowledge through which the intellectuals molded both people and state after their own missionary self-image. Their oscillatory, "emanative," systematically overflowing concept of sovereignty, domination and the state silently suggested that intellectual spokesmen were legitimately everywhere and could substitute for all other interests. The claim about the ontological primacy of the political performatively but obliquely supported the more subterranean claim about the political primacy of the intellectuals themselves.

As an initial illustration of this knowledge-political double play, we may call attention to the obverse side of the right-wing intellectuals'

65. See also Dick Pels, "Strange Standpoints, or: How to Define the Situation for Situated Knowledges," in *Telos* 108 (Summer 1996), pp. 65-92.

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politicization of the intellect, which was consistently balanced with a distinctly *spiritualist* or *intellectualist* definitions of the state and the political themselves. Extrapolating the long lineage of idealist philosophy and Romantic historiography which culminated in the Hegelian idea of objective spirit, the state was preferably circumscribed as a "spiritual form," a rational state in which the people became a subject-for-itself, attaining reflexive self-consciousness about its moral will and historical mission. The Hegelian ethical state was not only the moralizing but simultaneously the reasoning or rational state, the "social brain" which would act as a dynamic unifier and mobilizer of all human and physical resources. Gentile's neo-idealist statism was as spiritualist as Freyer's, which eulogized the state early on as the "spiritually conceived subject of history"[66] and as "the spirit as a goal,"[67] carefully stipulating that only those who knew the true direction of *Geist* had a right to historical action. Adding to a theme which had already attained prolific dimensions on the radical Right, Freyer also portrayed political action as a creative act and the political leader as a creative artist, who gave form to his people as an artist lent form to his work of art.[68] The "political turn" of spirit was hence consistently accompanied by a "spiritual turn" in the definition of the political itself; the newly projected synthesis of reason and power, far from implying a linear reduction of the former to the latter, simultaneously represented a bid for a spiritualized politics and a bid for power on the part of the "spiritual men" themselves.

The core notion of a knowledgeable, moralizing and entrepreneurial state also included an ambition toward the spiritualization of economic life, once again to be taken in the triple sense of rationalization, moralization and politicization. This cluster of virtual synonyms focussed what became one of the most persistent thematics in the discourse of the intellectual Right: the contrast between the Germanic "spirit of organization," inherently partial to rational planning and socialism, and the un-German (English, Jewish or generically foreign) spirit of capitalist individualism and disorganization. While the Italian fascist idea of the state as supreme consciousness and universal will of the nation could in this respect build on the tradition of political syndicalism, the Hitlerian conception of the strong state as "intelligence" and "organizer" of national production extended and repeated what was already fully contained in the "ideas of

66. Freyer, *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft*, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
67. Freyer, *Der Staat*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

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1914," which had dramatized the world-historical contest between the "idea of money" and the "idea of organization," and prophesied the coming rule of "the socialism of the civil servant and the organizer."[69] This Saint-Simonian form of the intellectual organizer also moved up front in the "developmental," mobilizing regimes as they were projected in the planning utopias of the Italian syndicalists or those of Jünger, Freyer and the *Tatkreis*.[70] Total mobilization of labor, to Jünger, was clearly suggestive of the novel power of organizational thinking.[71] His warrior-worker, moreover, was evidently metonymic for the political technician or the "organizing" intellectual (such as Jünger himself), whose existential condition and missionary aspirations had also inspired the (equally self-referring) profile of the class-conscious proletarian fighter according to Marx. In a broader intellectual context, indeed, the national syndicalist and conservative-revolutionary concepts of a state-directed "organization of labor" were definitely reminiscent of and parasitic on leftwing socialist concepts, as formulated much earlier by, e.g., Proudhon and Blanc.

Predictably, this idea of the "organization of labor" also encircled a persistent theme in corporatist thought, both in its more etatist and its more democratic "societal" versions.[72] As Manoïlescu phrased it in his influential *Le siècle du corporatisme*, the economically defined dominance of labor and capital was presently receding into the past, while political "organization" was emerging as a novel autonomous force, inaugurating a regime of order, unity and competence. In the new functionalist order, authority would dominate property, which was essentially a rent in the general interest, to be guarded by a dynamically innovating and coordinating state. Appealing to Saint-Simon as an inspiring precursor and emphasizing the radical differences separating the corporatist project from both liberalism and communism, Manoïlescu prefigured the organizer as the true prototype of the coming corporatist state.[73] Similar

69. Spengler, "Preussentum und Sozialismus," *op. cit.*, p. 47.

70. See Freyer's suggestions concerning an elite of physicians, teachers, engineers and poets (*Der Staat*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-180) and his explicit references to Saint-Simon (*Herrschaft, Planung, und Technik*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 26) and the "organization of labor" (*Der Staat*, *op. cit.*, pp. 146ff). On Zehrer's notion of a "revolution of the intellectuals" and his borrowings from Mannheim, see Dick Pels, "Missionary Sociology between Left and Right. A Critical Introduction to Mannheim," in *Theory, Culture and Society* (August 1993), Vol. 10, No. 3.

71. Jünger, "Die totale Mobilmachung," *op. cit.*, p. 140.

72. For this distinction see Philippe Schmitter, "Still the Century of Corporatism?" in *Review of Politics* (1977), Vol. 36, No. 1.

73. Manoïlescu, *Le siècle du corporatisme*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45, 102-3 and 361.

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concepts about a corporatist technocracy and a "new aristocracy" of technicians and political intellectuals were current in the writings of Italian syndicalists and nationalists such as Michels, Rocco, Spirito and Panunzio.[74] They also resonated in German-Romantic utopias about an organically articulated people's economy, in which all occupations would be defined as civic duties and in which a managerial elite of engineers, industrialists and *völkische* intellectuals would institute rational order within the framework of the national community.

Clearly, there was a significant right-wing, "national-socialist" variant of the traditionally Left-identified, "Saint-Simonian" vision of the political calling of a new managing elite and the significance of fascist ideology cannot be fully grasped independently of this elitist claim. The history of this multifaceted, politically diversified "socialism of the intellectuals," even if it was promoted by self-styled "anti-intellectual intellectuals" critical of Enlightenment values, at least sensitizes to some peculiar aspects of the still widely tabooed intellectual proximity between radical Left and radical Right, whose shared technocratic ideals sometimes offered a bridgehead for mutual intellectual exchanges and even crossovers from one side to the other. The viability and ubiquity of this shared "technocratic dream" was nowhere more clear than in the fateful itinerary of "crossover" intellectuals such as Mussolini, Michels, Lagardelle and other Sorelians in early-century France and Italy, represented more rarely in Germany by thinkers such as Sombart and epitomized perhaps most dramatically by Marcel Déat in France and Hendrik de Man in Belgium in the mid- and late 1930s.

"Crown princes" both of their respective parties, the SFIO and the BWP and influential revisionists of the orthodox Marxism embraced by their *patrons* Blum and Vandervelde, during the 1930s Déat and De Man slowly drifted toward premises and political tactics approximating notions about the strong state, a "national socialism," a state-directed economy and the rule of an intellectual technocracy also current at the other end of the political spectrum. Opposing Blum's "economistic" and "fatalist" policies in the summer of 1933, Déat and his associates capped their defence of a radically activist *néosocialisme* with the ringing slogan "Order, Authority, Nation," pleading a shift from class to national policy and the necessity of first organizing the economy within the national framework. De Man's plan of labor, enthusiastically adopted by the BWP at its Christmas Congress in the same year, similarly propounded a novel doctrine of

74. Rosenstock-Franck, *op. cit.*, p. 16; Gregor, *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship*, *op. cit.*

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socialization, according to which national implementation (or "socialism in one country") was to take priority over the shady prospect of internationalism. In a far-reaching reversal, the essence of socialization was located less in the transfer of ownership than in that of authority, which implied that control now took precedence over possession.[75] Anticipating Burnham, Berle and other managerialists, both De Man and Déat theorized that property and power were in the process of separating in the modern shareholding economy, which transformed the problem of socialism into one of organization and management rather than ownership of the means of production. In *Perspectives socialistes* (1930), Déat explicitly overturned the Marxist scenario by proposing to tackle first the *power* of capitalism, subsequently to take over *profit* and finally to socialize capitalist *property*. To be sure: the idea that socialization was no longer a question of ownership but of "technique of administration," as a result of the developing fissure between ownership and management, could already be found in conservative revolutionaries from Spengler to Fried and can be traced even further back to French and Italian syndicalism.[76]

In the late 1930s, the embryonic concept of the strong state common to both neo-socialism and planism, which presumed at least some degree of autonomy of the political *vis-à-vis* the economic, gradually evolved into a fully-fledged doctrine of state primacy and "authoritarian democracy," according to which the political state was to carry through a socialist revolution "from above" against the powers of capitalist finance and institute a corporatist regime to be run by an elite of intellectual technicians. Distancing themselves ever further from liberal parliamentarian politics, both Déat and De Man came to distinguish between what the latter called a "true, social and proletarian democracy" and a "false, only parliamentary and formal bourgeois democracy."[77] After the Nazi victory in early 1940, they both stood convinced that the demise of capitalist democracy was final and that the war inaugurated a revolutionary period which offered new promises for socialism. In a notorious manifesto of June 1940, De

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75. Dick Pels, "Hendrik de Man and the Ideology of Planism," in *International Review of Social History* (1987), Vol. 32, No. 3.

76. Spengler, "Preussentum," *op. cit.*, p. 95; Fried, *Das Ende des Kapitalismus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 142ff. In a kind of "cultural socialism" influenced by De Man, Jacques de Kadt also chose to call the fascist order of culture-politics-economics "the only acceptable and healthy" ordering, whereas the reverse Marxist ordering of economics-politics-culture represented "an unworthy and dishonorable sequence." See Dick Pels, *Het democratisch verschil. Jacques de Kadt en de nieuwe elite* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1993), p. 82.

77. Cited in Pels, "Hendrik de Man and the Ideology of Pleonasm," *op. cit.*, p. 226.

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Man advised his fellow socialists to join "the movement of national insurrection" in order to realize "the sovereignty of labor" under the guidance of a single party and a totalitarian state. Somewhat later, he acknowledged German National Socialism as "the German form of socialism" and pleaded cooperation with the Reich "within the framework of a unified Europe and a universal socialist revolution."[78] Like De Man, whose collaborationist adventure was comparatively brief, Déat in 1940 placed his considerable powers of intellect in the service of the National-Socialist revolution and entered the collaborationist regime of Vichy.[79]

Reinventing the Political

Half a century after the defeat of the fascist regimes, the intellectual horizon is in many respects dramatically altered. Precisely as a result of the indissoluble association between the heritage of the radical Right and the agonizing memories of the Holocaust, "fascism" has become a universal term of political abuse, eclipsing its ideological stature and pedigree and censuring its intellectual content as being unworthy of serious analysis. Given the persistence of this ideological void on the Right, radical assertions about a "primacy of the political" in the postwar period tended to originate from the Left and were often clad in the confusingly indirect Marxist vocabulary of the "primacy of the economic." However, some major new schools of Marxist theorizing that emerged in the early 1960s permitted a secular, if initially subterranean, conflation of the two vocabularies, following from an increasingly explicit "Gramscian" recognition of the specificity if not primordiality of political and cultural causation, which pressed against the limits of extension of the logic of "last instance" economic determination. While theorists such as Althusser and Poulantzas already stretched the Marxian logic of causality to its breaking point, post-Marxists such as Foucault, Deleuze, Lefort, the "new philosophers," and Laclau and Mouffe extrapolated this tendency even further, ending up by emphatically reinstating the political at the center of critical attention. Their efforts were parallelled by a massive "defection" of feminist theorists from a Marxist-inspired "political economy of sex" toward generalized notions about the "politics of the personal," "the politics of (gender) identity" and the "politics of discourse."

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78. Cited in Pels, "The Dark Side of Socialism," *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

79. See Stanley Grossman, *Neo-Socialism. A Study in Political Metamorphosis* (Ph.D. University of Wisconsin, 1969); and Emily H. Goodman *The Socialism of Marcel Déat* (Ph.D. Stanford University, 1973).

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Other intellectual currents, such as ecology or constructivist science and technology studies, similarly abandoned the apparent constrictions of economic repertoires in order to clear the field for a "politics of nature" and a "politics of things."

There is a coldly ironic, disquieting aspect of *déja-vu* in this novel omnipresence of the political on the political Left, which to some extent exhibits an involuntary "return of the repressed," insofar as it actually recycles many of the critical arguments previously advanced against Marxist and liberal economism by intellectuals of the prewar political Right. Some theorizations come rather close to reinventing the "conservative revolutionary" reversal of priorities by substituting ontological concepts of the political for previous concepts of the economic that continue to resemble the transcendental mechanics of the "last instance." Three such examples may be briefly cited here as collectively exemplifying the latter-day paradox of a Right-inspired search for a new Left-oriented political paradigm. Many are also sufficiently impressed, especially by Schmitt's razor-sharp critique of traditional liberalism, to honor him with recalcitrant or inverse readings of his political theory. The journal *Telos* has long stood in the forefront of this critical acclaim.[80] Introducing a special issue on the French New Right, for instance, its editor, Paul Piccone, identifies the "bureaucratic centralism" of the former Soviet Union and Western "liberal technocracy" as variations of the same basic Enlightenment model which "by defining all conflicts in economic terms, has successfully occluded a more pervasive logic of domination beyond labor/capital conflicts and predicated on the political power and obtaining between the rulers and the ruled, the experts and the masses, the administrators and the administrated." The main implication of this theory about a newly emerging New Class of politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats, for Piccone, is "the displacement of *economic* conflicts between labor and capital as the *deus ex machina* of social dynamics, in favor of *political* conflicts between those possessing a 'cultural capital' redeemable as social and political power and those with mere 'cultural liabilities.'" The inspiration for this political analysis of cultural class is quarried both from

80. See the special issue on Schmitt, *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), e.g., the contributions by the editors and by former Althusserian Paul Hirst; and the section on Schmitt in the Spring issue of the same year. Since then *Telos* has regularly translated and discussed Schmitt as well as New Right polymath Alain de Benoist. On the latter and the New Right more generally, see extensively *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993/Spring 1994). See also the special issue on Schmitt of Benoist's journal *Nouvelle Ecole* 44 (Spring 1987).

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Left theoreticians such as Gouldner and Konrad and Szelenyi and from the critique of (leftwing) intellectuals by the New Right.[81]

Laclau and Mouffe's writings offer another singular illustration of the internal groundswell which has swept Gramscian Marxism toward a Schmittian invocation of the primordiality of the political. While some commentators already saw Laclau's early *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (1977) as drifting toward a "power conception of class,"[82] Laclau and Mouffe's "post-Marxist" work, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, more emphatically distanced itself from the orthodox reductionist and essentialist economic paradigm in order to affirm "the new articulatory and recomposing logic of hegemony" as an autonomous *political* logic which itself structured the space of the economic.[83] Crossing the Marxist threshold in an even more decisive manner, Mouffe's appropriately entitled *The Return of the Political* further extends their collaborative project by entering upon a close engagement with the legacy of Schmitt, with a view to articulating a radical project of "agonistic" pluralism which is set squarely against the "anti-political" rationalism of Rawlsian political philosophy. Adopting Schmitt's conviction that "the political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society," she chooses to understand it "as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition." In doing so, she closely follows Lefort's call for a new political philosophy, as well as his expansive understanding of politics as "a specific mode of institution of the social," as the "disciplinary matrix" of social life.[84]

Perhaps it is Lefort's political theory of democracy which provides the closest and most comprehensive approximation to Schmittian concerns,

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81. Paul Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?" in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter-Spring 1993-94), pp. 8-11. See also the discussions concerning *Telos*'s 'populist' and 'Schmittian' turn in *Telos* 107 (Spring 1996), pp. 121-168, especially Piccone's "Is There a *Telos* Right?" Piccone recalls that, in the mid-1980s, the *Telos* editors split into what he calls a "New Class" wing, which stuck to the primacy of economic analysis, and a "populist" wing, which emphasized the primacy of politics and culture, relegating economic questions to an instrumental level. See "The Tribulations of Left Social Criticism: Reply to Palti," p. 145n. See also pp. 157ff.

82. Richard Wolff and Stephen Resnick, "Property, Power and Class," in *Socialist Review* (1986), Vol. 16, No. 2, p. 108.

83. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: New Left Books, 1985), pp. 4 and 75ff.

84. Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993), pp. 3, 11, 18ff, 51-52.

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even while it is likewise formulated in the strictest opposition to all totalitarian presumptions of identity.[85] The "great swerve" from sophisticated Marxist economism towards political philosophy repeats itself in the history of Castoriadis' and Lefort's *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group, which gradually emancipated itself from a Trotskyite critique of "bureaucratic collectivism" toward a recognition of new politically based forms of exploitation and domination, carrying the questioning step by step "to the heart of Marxist certainty."[86] Socialist thought, Lefort estimated, had insufficiently liberated itself from the liberal problematic, which proclaimed that reality "was to be disclosed at the level of the economy" and thus repressed the question of the political. Marxism's rejection of the political, its "refusal to think in political terms," resulted not simply in a deficient theory of the state, but more profoundly, in a complete lack of a concept of political society, including the nature of totalitarian regimes instituted under the aegis of Marxism itself. Hence the need for a new political philosophy that was able to rehabilitate the political beyond its "positivist" delineation as sector or domain in the social structure toward a broader recognition of it as a generative, originary principle of society, after the model of the Platonic *politeia*.[87] "Politics," as specific domanial activity, should be differentiated from "the political," which defined the primal dimensionality of the social, configuring society's overall schema and governing the articulation of its various levels or dimensions. It was precisely the focus on narrower "politics," Lefort argued, that obscured the broader acting of "the political" as the formative impulsive primal giving-form of society, taken in the double sense of giving it meaning and location.[88] In democratic societies, this political configuration of the social crucially implied a disentangling of state and society, a separation of the autonomous spheres of power, law and knowledge. Henceforth, the locus of power no longer constituted a substance but an "empty space"; it could not be occupied or appropriated and no individual or group could be consubstantial with it. This strictly opposed the democratic political

85. See De Wit, *op. cit.*, pp. 479ff.

86. Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society. Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p. 297.

87. Claude Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), pp. 2-3.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 11 and 219: "The political is thus revealed, not in what we call political activity, but in the double movement whereby the mode of institution of society appears and is obscured. It appears in the sense that the process whereby society is ordered and unified across its divisions becomes visible."

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configuration to the identitarian logic of totalitarianism, which strove to recover power as a substantial reality with the purpose of reunifying society as a homogenous social body governed by a supreme, sovereign power.[89] In this fashion, a totalizing concept of the political closely resembling Schmitt's was paradoxically deflected against the Schmittian politics of homogeneity, subverting its totalitarian temptation by means of a "divisive" vision of democratic difference.

Fifty years after the fascist defeat, this left-wing reinvention of the political is also seconded by parallel reactivating efforts issuing from the New Right. The repressed has also returned under its own flag, aided by the natural obliviousness that belongs to a new generational experience. The fact remains that criticism directed at the universal "marketing" or "economization" of existence and the triumphant proclamation of the liberal "end of history" is no longer solely operated from the Left but is also nurtured by a new radicalism of the Right, which is increasingly implicated in a process of intellectual rationalization. This new intellectualization of the Right implies, among other things, an intense rereading of the neglected legacy of the Conservative Revolution, including its prominent theme of the "primacy of the political." Aschheim has observed that, while the resuscitation of Nietzsche into something like a "European vogue figure" required that he emigrate to France in order to "catch" the poststructuralist revolution of the 1970s, there are signs that he is presently emigrating back and is reappropriated by a new German intellectual Right.[90] In France, however, Benoist has from an early date incorporated Nietzsche's legacy, as well as that of Schmitt, Niekisch and other conservative revolutionaries, in his synthetic project of a New Right;[91] his "Aristotelian" and communitarian conceptions of democracy and citizenship run largely parallel to conservative-revolutionary vindications of the primordial nature of the political. Among the leftist ideas also appropriated in the mid-1970s was Gramsci's converging theory of cultural and political hegemony,[92] thus compounding the spectacle of a Right-inspired leftism with the reverse one of a Left-inspired paradigm of the Right.

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89. *Ibid.*, p. 233.

90. Aschheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-306.

91. Alain de Benoist *Aus Rechter Sicht*, Vol. 1 (Tübingen: Grabert Verlag, 1983), pp. 7ff.; idem, Vol. 2 (1984), pp. 7ff.; idem, "Democracy Revisited," in *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993); Pierre-André Taguieff, "Discussion or Inquisition? The Case of Alain de Benoist," *Telos* 98-99 (Winter-Spring 1993-94).

92. Piccone, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Mark Wegierski, "The New Right in Europe," *Telos* 98-99 (Winter-Spring 1993-94), p. 63.

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In this fashion, the radical-conservative version of the "primacy of the political" may be celebrating an unexpected return. Intellectuals such as Jünger, Heidegger, Freyer and Schmitt once again figure as house gods of right-wing intellectual journals such as the German *Junge Freiheit* or *Etappe*, or the Russian *Elementy*, which not only communicate with Benoist but also negotiate with the thought of Foucault and other representatives of French poststructuralism.[93] Significantly, the new conservatism has also joined forces with radical political ecology and its apocalyptic sense of a civilization in disarray, boosting its penchant for totalizing and authoritarian solutions. "Eco-fascism" (or what is sometimes referred to as *Blut und Boden* ecology) calls for a strong state in order to protect the ecological "commonwealth" and its "natural order" from destruction both through natural disasters and through overpopulation and contamination, which collectively threaten the identity and integrity of the people and its natural habitat. Calls for a "patriotic protection of the environment," as phrased in the 1990 program of the Republikaner Party, are not far from more radical proposals such as entertained by former Green ideologist Herbert Gruhl, who activates familiar Schmittian themes in emphasizing the ecological "state of exception," which is necessarily governed by "martial law," the imperative need for an authoritarian state to plot a strategy of survival and implement it with force, and the concomitant need for abolishing democratic procedure in favor of a dictatorship — in the present context, of an elite of the ecologically enlightened.[94]

93. See Göran Dahl, "Will the 'Other God' Fail Again? On the Possible Return of the Conservative Revolution," in *Theory, Culture and Society* (February 1996), Vol. 13, No. 1.

94. Thomas Jahn and Peter Wehling, *Ökologie von Rechts* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 1991).

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*Hayek: A Critique**

Alain de Benoist

The "Club de l'Horloge" held its 5th annual meeting October 20-22 1989 in Nice, on "Liberalism at the People's Service." The general tone was "national liberal" conservative. According to the Club's president, Henry de Lesquen, "there can be no authentic liberal society as long as the concept of man emerging from the Western, humanist and Christian tradition has not prevailed."[1] The objective was to contrapose two liberal traditions: Locke's vs. Hume's and Burke's, i.e., a "bad liberalism" leading to libertarian or anarcho-capitalist movements, and a "good liberalism" concerned with preserving tradition and thus reconcilable with a "nationalist" perspective. This politically opportunistic approach legitimates itself by appealing to a long gone author: Friedrich A. (von) Hayek. While the distinction[2] has recently

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* Translated by Deborah Shair.

1. See *La presse française* (November 4, 1989).

2. Jacques Garello, the head of the "new economists," pointed out that "liberals are liberal; they are not part of the Right." See *La nouvelle lettre* (September 2, 1989). As he had written earlier: "In the name of the nation, we cannot protect privileges and industries or exclude foreigners. In that sense, liberals are not nationalists." See *La nouvelle lettre* (May 11, 1987). Hayek himself explicitly rejected a "conservative" identification. See his "Why I Am Not a Conservative," in *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), reprinted in Chiaki Nishiyama and Kurt R. Leube, eds., *The Essence of Hayek* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), pp. 281-298. This should not come as a surprise because, as Philippe Nemo put it, "liberalism is no less the adversary of conservatism than of socialism." See his *La société de droit selon F. A. Hayek* (Paris: PUF, 1988), p. 369. For another critical viewpoint, but from within the same political perspective, see Jean-Claude Bardet, "Le Libéralism est un Ennemi," in *Le choc du mois* (November 1989), pp. 18-20 — an article criticized by Jean-Marie Le Pen in *Le Figaro-Magazine* (February 17, 1990). The distinction between the "two liberalisms" is reminiscent of divisions in the US between "conservatives" such as Russel Kirk, "neo-conservatives" such as Norman Podhoretz, and libertarians such as Murray N. Rothbard, David Friedman, etc.

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been somewhat mitigated, "national liberalism" (or conservative liberalism) constantly reappears in the history of ideas.[3] A good way to approach this problem is to begin with Hayek's works.

I

Within liberal doctrines, there is no question about the originality of Hayek's approach.[4] Distancing himself from "continental" liberalism

3. In the past century, movements or parties explicitly identifying themselves as "national-liberal" have thrived in Germany, Holland, and Anglo-Saxon countries. For the situation in Frace, see Edmond Marc Lipiansky, *L'Âme Française ou le National-Libéralisme: Analyse d'une représentation sociale* (Paris: Antropos, 1979).

4. Born in Vienna in 1899, Hayek became a professor at the London School of Economics in 1931. His came to liberalism mainly under the influence of Ludwig von Mises, with whom he broke soon thereafter. During the 1930s, his work was eclipsed by Keynes' ideas. In 1944, his pamphlet *The Road to Serfdom* (Paris: PUF, 1993) revived his fame and in April 1947 brought about the creation of the Society of Mont-Pèlerin. From 1950 to 1956, he was a professor of moral philosophy in Chicago, where he wrote his best known works, specifically the three volumes of *Law, Legislation and Liberty* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973-79). He ruturned to Austria in 1956, where he taught at the University of Salzburg until he retired in 1969. In 1974, he shared the Nobel Prize in Economics with Gunnar Myrdal. During the 1970s and 1980s his works were rediscovered by American libertarians and by the "new economists" in France. He died on March 23, 1992. His main works are: *Monetary Theory and Trade Cycle* (1929); *Prices and Production* (1931); *Monetary Nationalism and International Stability* (1933); *Collectivist Economic Planning* with Ludwig von Mises, 1935); *The Political Idea of the Rule of Law* (1937); *Profits, Interest and Investment* (1939); *The Pure Theory of Capital* (1940); *The Counter-Revolution of Science* (1944); *Individualism and Economic Order* (1948); *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960); *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (1967); *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics, Economics and the History of Ideas* (1978); *Denationalization of Money* (1974-76); *1980s Unemployment and the Unions* (1980); *Money, Capital and Fluctuations* (1985). His last book (with W. W. Bartley III), *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), is the lead volume of the *Collected Works of Friedrich A. Hayek* in twenty-two volumes, currently being published by the University of Chicago Press. For an exhaustive bibliography on Hayek (up to July 1983), see John Gray, *Hayek on Liberty* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 143-209. See also: Fritz Machlup, ed., *Essays on Hayek* (New York: New York University Press, 1976); Eamonn Butler, *Hayek: His Contribution to the Political and Economic Thought of Our Time* (London: Temple Smith, 1983); Nishiyama and Leube, eds., *The Essence of Hayek*, *op. cit.*; Arthur Sheldon, ed., *Hayek's "Serfdom" Revisited* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1984; Kurt R. Leube and Albert H. Slabinger, eds., *The Political Economy of Freedom: Essays in Honor of F. A. Hayek* (Munich-Vienna: Philosophia, 1984); Nemo, *Société de droit selon F. A. Hayek*, *op. cit.*; Gilles Dostaler and Diane Ethier, eds., *Fredrich Hayek: philosophie, économie et politique* (Paris: Economica, 1989); Guido Vetusti, ed., *Il Realismo Politico di Ludwig von Mises e Friedrich von Hayek*, (Milan: Giuffré, 1989); Jérôme Ferry, *Friedrich A. Hayek: Les éléments d'un libéralisme radical* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1990); Bruno Pays, *Libérer la monnaie: Les contributions monétaries de Mises, Rueff et Hayek* (Paris: PUF, 1991); and Barry J. McCormick, *Hayek and the Keynesian Avalanche* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

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(with the exception of that of Tocqueville and Benjamin Constant), Hayek seeks to return to the original Anglo-Scottish individualism and liberalism (Hume, Smith, Mandeville, Ferguson), while restricting notions such as reason, pure equilibrium, natural order and social contract. To do this, he paints a broad picture. Accordingly, throughout history humanity has adopted two socially and morally opposed systems. The first, the "tribal order," reflects "primitive" conditions of life. It denotes a closed system whose members know one another and organize their conduct in terms of concrete objectives determined in a relatively homogeneous manner. In this society of face to face interactions arranged in terms of collective goals, human relations are largely determined by "instinct" and are essentially based on solidarity, reciprocity, and group altruism.

This "tribal order" gradually unravelled as personal ties dissolved into more impersonal social structures. It gave way to modern society, which Hayek first called a "grand society" and then an "extensive order" — something corresponding more or less to Popper's "open society." This modern society (where liberalism, capitalism, free exchange, individualism etc. are the predominant ideological forms) knows no limits. Thus social relations can no longer be regulated according to the face to face model. Within such a society, "instinctual" behavior becomes useless and is replaced by abstract contractual arrangements (except, perhaps, within very small groups such as families). Order does not come about as a result of wishes or intentions, but spontaneously and in the abstract, under the impact of multiple interrelations among the various agents. The "grand society" is a social system which spontaneously manages without a common goal.

While Mises regarded liberal institutions as the product of a conscious choice predicated on abstract rationality, Hayek claims that in the "grand society" these institutions were slowly selected by habit. In other words, men did not gradually master their environment and develop new institutions through logical deduction or even rational analysis. Rather, they did so by means of rules (Hayek defines man as a "rule following animal") acquired by experience and sanctified by time. Reason is not the cause but the product of culture. Use is not sanctioned. It is imminent to the state of things. Thus it is impossible to locate the origin of institutions which have persisted over time. Culture results from the transmission of rules learned from the appropriate behavior — rules which were never invented and whose function remains uncomprehended by those who follow them.

For Hayek, modern society constitutes a "spontaneous order" which no human will could ever reproduce or surpass, which came into being

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according to a Darwinian model. Modern civilization is neither a product of nature nor an artifice but the result of cultural evolution where selection operates automatically. From this viewpoint, social rules play the role attributed to mutations in neo-Darwinian theory: certain rules are retained because they are "more efficient" and provide an advantage to those who adopt them ("rules of correct behavior"), while others are abandoned. According to Philippe Nemo, "rules are not invented *a priori*, but selected *a posteriori*, in terms of a process of trial and error and stabilization."[5] A rule will be retained or rejected according to whether, through experience, it proves *useful* to the whole system constituted by already existing rules. Hayek writes: "It is the gradual selection of increasingly impersonal and abstract behavioral rules liberating individual free will while insuring a further domestication of instinct and drives inherited from preceding phases of social development which have permitted the coming into being of the "grand society," rendering possible spontaneous coordination of the ever more widespread activities of human groups." In fact, "if freedom has become a political morality, it follows from a natural selection, which means that society has gradually selected the value system responding best to the constraints of survival, which were those of the biggest number." After all, before anything, culture is "memory of beneficial behavioral rules selected by the group."[6]

The emergence of modernity is thus presented as the "natural" result of the evolution of a civilization which has gradually established individual freedom as both an abstract and general principle of collective discipline, i.e., as emancipation from traditional society and as a passage to "a system of abstract disciplines where the actions of each person toward others are guided by obedience, no longer with known goals, but with general and impersonal rules which were not deliberately established by man, and whose role is to allow for the construction of orders more complex than we can understand." This Darwinian social vision is closely related to the ideology of progress. It implies an optimistic and utilitarian reading of history: "grand society" is *worth more* that the "tribal order," and the proof that it is better is that it has displaced it.

After having posed diachronically, i.e., historically, the distinction between his two great models of society, Hayek redeploys it in synchronically by contraposing *taxis* and *kosmos*. The first of these terms, *taxis*, defines consciously instituted orders — all political projects associating

5. Nemo, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

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collectivism with a common goal, all forms of planning, state intervention, the administered economy, etc. For Hayek, this is obviously a resurgence of the "tribal order." The word *kosmos*, on the contrary, refers to "spontaneous," self-engendered order, i.e., "naturally" stemming from the practices which characterize the "grand society." This spontaneous order does not exist in relation to any goal. Its members participate in it while pursuing only their individual objectives, the interaction of their particular strategies determining mutual adjustment. Thus the *kosmos* comes about independently of human intentions and projects. According to the famous formula of Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), it "results from the actions of man, but not of his projects."[7]

This definition of modern society as fundamentally and necessarily *opaque* leads Hayek to reject the classical definition of competition as a phenomenon presupposing, for its proper functioning, that economic and social players have information as complete as possible. Hayek rejects the idea of a transparent market: pertinent information can never be completely at the disposal of its agents. On the contrary, he claims that the best argument for the market economy is that information is always incomplete and imperfect, because in such conditions it is best to always leave each person to fend for himself with what he knows. Here competition is the result of *laissez-faire*, whereas in the classical model *laissez-faire* is implied by the hypothesis of pure and perfect competition.

The typical trait of the "grand society" is the structural excess of *pertinent* compared to *available* information. The so-called "synoptic" illusion consists in believing in the possibility of perfect information. Hayek's reasoning is as follows: knowledge of social processes is necessarily limited because it is in a permanent state of collective formation. No individual or group has access to this. Thus no one can claim to have access to or to be able to take into account all of the parameters. Yet, effective social action demands complete familiarity with the pertinent facts. To the extent that such a familiarity is impossible, no one can claim to act on society according to his interests or even to undertake a perfectly adequate action in relation to the object in view. Hayek draws a sociological consequence from this epistemological state of affairs: some ignorance is inevitable; the incompleteness of information drives the impossibility to foresee the real consequences of actions, which leads to doubt about the operationality of our knowledge. Since man is not omniscient, the best he can do is rely on

7. *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, London 1767 (London: Louis Schneider, 1980).

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tradition, i.e., habit sanctified by experience. According to Nemo: "real rationalism consists in recognizing the value of normative knowledge transmitted by tradition, despite its opacity and its irreducibility to logic."[8]

The market is obviously the key to the entire system. In a society of individuals, exchange takes place within the context of the market, which is the only conceivable means of integration. For Smith and Mandeville, the market is an abstract mode of social regulation. It is governed by an "invisible hand" following objective laws which supposedly regulate relations among individuals, independently of any human authority. The market is intrinsically anti-hierarchical: it is a way of making decisions where no one decides for anyone other than oneself. Thus social order becomes confused with economic order, whose unintended results are actions undertaken by agents pursuing their best interest.

Hayek accepts Smith's theory of the "invisible hand," i.e., that totally impersonal mechanisms are at work in a free market. Yet Hayek makes some very important modifications. Smith operates on a macro-economic level: although operating in an apparently disorderly manner, individual acts end up miraculously contributing to the collective interest or to everyone's well-being. This is why Smith allows for public intervention when individual aims do not bring about collective well-being. Hayek does not allow for this exception. Classical liberalism also claims that the competitive market allows for the optimal satisfaction of particular ends. Hayek argues that, since the ends cannot be known, they are never given. Thus it is not possible to give the market the ability to translate the hierarchy of values. Such a claim is tautological because "the relative intensity of the demand for goods and services, an intensity to which the market will adjust its production, is itself determined by the distribution of revenue determined by market mechanisms." Having no priority, the market is not ordered according to goals: it leaves them undetermined and only deals with reconciling means. Furthermore, in classical theory the optimal allocation of scarce resources is theoretically guaranteed by the adjustment of competitive markets forming a general balance. Following Mises and anticipating the critique eventually developed by G. L. S. Schackle and Ludwig Lachmann, Hayek rejects this static, Walras-inspired vision and tries his best to substitute an optimal institutional system for a socially optimal system of production, thus replacing the general static balance with a partially dynamic one.

Finally, Hayek claims that it is not the agents' freedom which makes

8. Nemo, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

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exchange possible, but the other way around. This is crucial and has decisive consequences. From a classical viewpoint — the market in the strictest sense of the term — was still linked to the only economic sphere, while the state's role was to "complete the market" by guaranteeing its proper operation, even occasionally substituting for it. From the neo-liberal viewpoint, i.e., that of generalized economics, the market becomes an explicative model, an interpretative framework applicable to all human activity. Thus there is a marriage market, a crime market, etc. Politics itself is redefined as a market where entrepreneurs (politicians) try to be elected by responding to the demands of voters, themselves seeking to pursue their best interests. Hayek indirectly legitimates this vision by no longer posing the market merely as an economic mechanism allowing for the miraculous adjustment of individuals' private plans. Rather, it is an ordered formation, a spontaneously established *order* prior to and independent of all individual action, which through the price system allows for the optimal communication of information. Under these conditions, the market takes over the social. It is no longer just the *model* of human activity, but the activity itself. Far from dealing only with economic activity (Hayek tends to restrict the word 'economy' for elementary units such as enterprises and the home), it becomes a system of general social regulations, pompously called "catalaxis" (a neologism borrowed from Mises). It is no longer simply an economic mechanism for the optimal allocation of resources in a universe traditionally described as governed by scarcity — a mechanism ordered by some positive finality (individual happiness, wealth, well-being); rather, it is a sociological as well as political order, an instrumental formal support for the possibility of individuals to freely pursue their particular objectives. In short, it is a structure, i.e., a process with no subject, spontaneously managing the coexistence of the plurality of private goals, which imposes itself on everyone to the extent that, by nature, it prevents individuals as well as groups from trying to reform it.

The principle asserted here is obviously that of an individual activity closely associated with the market model of exchange. Freedom remains defined as the absence of constraints and coercion. It expresses "the situation where each person can use what he knows in view of what he wants to do" — a state of affairs guaranteed only by the order of the market. Freedom is no longer the means to achieve an objective through social action, but the impersonal gift historical evolution bestowed on men with the emergence of the abstract order of exchange. There is no freedom outside of the market!

Pierre Rosanvallon rightly claims that "somehow, liberalism turns the

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depersonalization of the world into the conditions for progress and freedom."[9] Hayek's efforts are part and parcel of this vision to replace human power with social regulations as impersonal as possible. Locke had already argued that those in authority should set only general and universal rules. For Hayek, the social coherence that results not from sharing some collective goal but from the mutual adjustment of each person's anticipations is both logical and functional. A social state is coherent when its behavioral rules are not contradictory and conform with its evolution. In the same way that for Popper one cannot establish the true but only eliminate the false (falsifiability), for Hayek, one cannot define fair rules but only determine those that are not fair. The least unfair rules are those which do not hinder the proper functioning of the market, which best conform to impersonal and abstract order, and which deviate the least from established practice. The good society is therefore one where the legislator's law (*thesis*) stays closest to the customs (*nomos*) which have allowed the emergence of the market. It follows that a constitution should not deal with substantial but only neutral and abstract rights, setting limits to legislative or executive action.

The law's objective is no longer to organize individual actions in terms of the common good or of some particular project, but to codify the rules whose only function is to protect individual freedom of action, i.e., to indicate "to each person what he can count on, which material objects or services he can use for his projects, and the kind of action he can engage in." According to Hayek, however, the legal order cannot protect the formation of individual anticipations in accord with the already instituted order of things. Conversely, only those individual anticipations in agreement with this instituted order can be regarded as legitimate. The rules will then be purely formal norms, without any substantial content — a necessary condition for them to be universally valid. Hayek emphasizes that "only if they are universally applicable, without any regard for their particular effects, will they be able to maintain the abstract order." Of course, individuals will all be set as equals in relation to these formal rules, but since they refer to a concrete reality which is nothing other than liberal capitalism, their equality will have no substance: formal equality will go hand in hand with real social inequality.

A society organized according to market exchange would be able to obtain the support of all without ever proposing any common goals. It would institute an order of pure means, leaving everyone responsible for

9. *Le Libéralisme économique: Histoire de l'idée de marché* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. VII.

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their own goals. What aggregates men in the *catalaxis*, defined as "the order engendered by the mutual adjustment of numerous individual economies to the market,"[10] is not a community of goals but a community of means expressed in the abstract order of the law. Along with Hume and Montesquieu, Hayek also believed in the pacifying virtue of exchange. By avoiding the dangers of face to face relations typical of the "tribal order" and the debates concerning collective goals, the market would neutralize rivalries, calm passions, and put an end to conflicts. If all members of the "grand society" were aggregated within a system of means substituted for a debate concerning goals, oppositions would disappear or find their own solutions.

This social model immediately poses a problem of interpretation. At first glance, one could be tempted to consider the idea of a *spontaneous* order as an avatar of the *natural* order, as conceived by counter-revolutionary theoreticians most hostile to voluntarism. This, however, would be a mistake because Hayek does not present the spontaneous order as a return to a state both original and permanent, somehow constitutive of all social orders, but as an order acquired over time and culminating in the modern era. It is an order resulting from a "natural" evolution, but which is still not a "natural order." The manner Hayek posits the autonomy of the social gives his reasoning the appearance of holism — at least to the extent that he sees the market as a globalizing totality implying exchange relations between agents which are not attributes of the isolated individual. Finally, the idea of a spontaneous order seems to imply a systems theory notion of self-organization, and Hayek himself at various times sought to integrate his ideas with those of P. A. Weiss, with cybernetic models (Heinz von Forster), with concepts of complexity (John von Neumann) and "auto-poesis" (Francisco Varela, H. Maturana), with the thermodynamic of open systems (Ilya Prigogine), etc.[11]

In fact, Hayek reformulates earlier ideas put forth by Mandeville, Smith, and Ferguson — the three founders of the new theory of "civil society." Within the context of liberal thought, the originality of these

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10. Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty, op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 131.

11. On Hayek and self-organization, see Jean-Pierre Dupuy, "L'Autonomie et la complexité du social," in *Science et pratique de la complexité* (Paris: Documentation Française, 1986), pp. 293-306. See also Milan Zeleny, ed., *Autopoiesis, Dissipative Structures, and Spontaneous Social Orders* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980); and Francisco Varela, *Principles of Biological Autonomy* (New York: Elsevier, 1979). Of course, the notion of uncertainty associated with that of complexity goes back to Heisenberg's 1927 formulation of the principles of indeterminacy.

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authors was to distance themselves both from Jeremy Bentham's naive utilitarianism and from the philosophy of natural right. Their contribution consists in no longer searching for the *origin* of society (what led Locke to postulate the social contract) but focusing on *regulation* or social functioning. Gautier has argued that this evolution corresponds to the shift from a vision of the world based on theodicy to one based on sociodicy.[12] The essential point is dismissal of the fiction of the contract and recognition of social ties as components of human nature. A society constituting the natural framework of human existence no longer needs to unveil the secret of its "origin" in a contractual agreement between isolated individuals. The *market* mechanism substitutes for the artifice of the contract as a foundation of social life. This avoids the aporias typical of contract theories inherited from Hobbes or Locke and is the foundation of the Smithian theory of the "invisible hand" — a theory which takes into account habits, customs and even the traditions which have accompanied the emergence of the market. To some extent, as with Ferguson, market exchange becomes the specific modality of social relations based on custom.

Gautier is right, therefore, in speaking of an "impure individualism" to describe this new liberal process which seeks to found "the relation of cogenesis of the one and the whole on a specific anthropology" in order to reconcile individual interest and the social whole without recourse to a social contract. The consequences are crucial. If the market model alone explains the functioning of society, then the economy is the best way to *realize* the political. This implies an indictment of public power, because if man is naturally social it is no longer necessary to "force" him to live in society: "The state is no longer constitutive of social bonds, it only guarantees their permanence." Better yet, public power must always be "neutralized" in order to prevent it from "invading" civil society. Politicians are thereby delegitimated in their attempt to realize particular goals. By rejecting the social contract and by focusing on a spontaneous order beyond nature and artifice, Hayek places himself squarely within this school. This explains the holistic appearance of his system: the market is assimilated to the social "whole" and constitutes the highest form of regulation on a supra-individual level .

Here appearances must not mislead. One can speak of holism only when the whole has its own logic and goal, i.e., characteristics different from those of its constituent elements. But this is precisely what Hayek

12. See his dissertation, "La Genèse de la société civile libérale. Mandeville-Smith-Ferguson," presented at the University of Paris I, January 1990.

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rejects as typical of a "tribal order." Even though the individual is never entirely isolated, since he is always in society and, from a moral viewpoint, fully human only in relation to his fellow human beings, in the "grand society" social relations can be understood solely in terms of the multiplicity of its parts. Society is organized only in terms of its individuals, in the same way that the market is seen only as an aggregation of individual preferences: society is constitued by the interaction of particular interests. The social is thus deduced from the individual, not the other way around. The individual is the ultimate irreducible unit. It follows that the intelligence of the whole is a function of its parts and that there cannot be any collective entity, such as a people, a culture or a nation, with an identity different from that of the sum of its individual components. Finally, individuals' behavior is governed only by the goals they pose for themselves. The members of society are social atoms "free to use their own knowledge for their own objectives." What guides their choices is obviously the pursuit of their best interest. Hayek is not so naive as to believe that everyone behaves rationally. He does claim, however, that such behavior is advantageous in that, in a society where it is comparatively more profitable to act rationally, rational behavior will gradually spread by selection or imitation. Thus, in social life the individual is compelled to behave as an economic agent in the market. This is all within the paradigms of methodological individualism and *homo oeconomicus*.

Hayek actually poses the individual less *autonomous* than *independent* since, as Jean-Pierre Dupuy points out, "autonomy is compatible with the submission to a universally-valid, supra-individual sphere — to a normative law limiting individuals according to rules of a self-grounded normativity — while independent individuals are unable to willingly or consciously pose an order as a project."[13] Beyond all consideration of the formation of structures ordered in terms of aleatory fluctuations, this distinction indicates the limits of a possible reconciliation between Hayek's ideas and the systems theory notion of self-organization: the latter implies an anti-reductionist vision where the whole inevitably exceeds the sum of its parts.

II

Having defined the "grand society," Hayek goes on to study the ideology he opposes, which he calls "constructivism." This ideology, he says, is the result of a "synoptic illusion." It consists in believing that social

13. "L'Individu Liberal, cet Inconnu: d'Adam Smith à Friedrich Hayek," in *Individu et justice sociale: Autour de John Rawls* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p. 80.

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arrangements can be the result of man's voluntary intentions and actions, i.e., that it is possible to construct or reform society according to some project. Constructivism claims that "human institutions will only serve human designs if they have been deliberately elaborated according to these designs." Yet, Hayek maintains it is impossible to relate institutions to willful acts, since this requires the kind of complete information which is never available. Thus constructivism systematically overestimates the possible role of social engineers, reformers and politicians.

Hayek first located the source of constructivism in scientism, in the human sciences' "servile imitation" of the concepts, methods and objectives of the physical sciences. He next went to Descartes. The Cartesian mechanistic approach, which he considers a French disease, calls for logico-mathematical intelligibility in the social sciences as well as elsewhere and that, from this perspective, institutions can be constructed and reconstructed at will, like so many means devised to achieve particular goals. Hayek regards this as a "presumption of reason" because allegedly reason cannot determine the right goals conducive to the common good but only the formal conditions of the agents' activity.[14]

For Hayek, the archetype of constructivism is *socialism*, which represents the resurgence of the "tribal order" at the very heart of the "grand society." Accordingly, the success of socialism results from the fact that it emphasizes "atavistic instincts" of solidarity and altruism which today have become anachronistic. From Hayek's viewpoint, however, "socialism" must be understood in a broad sense. It gradually comes to designate all kinds of "social engineering" and all types of political and economic projects. Hayek criticizes Descartes' followers, as well as the advocates of a holistic or organicist concept of society, the counter-revolutionaries as well as the romantics. According to him, in a strict sense, socialism, Marxism, fascism and social democracy are all the restult of the same "constructivism," which begins with the most modest kinds of state intervention or social reform. Assigning a goal to production, imposing solidarity, redistributing revenues to benefit the least privileged, legislating on the environment or social protection, progressive taxation, imposing

14. Hayek distinguishes between "constructive" and "evolutionary" rationalism — a distinction closely related to Popper's distinction between historicist and critical rationalism. Libertarian authors and, more generally, American liberals who consider themselves rationalists, regard this critique excessive. See Lauren Dobuzinskis, "The Complexities of Spontaneous Order" and David Miller, "The Fatalistic Conceit," both in the special issue of *Critical Review* dedicated to Hayek on the occasion of his 90th birthday, "F. A. Hayek's Liberalism" (Spring 1989), pp. 241-266 and 310-323, respectively.

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any type of economic protection — all this is the result of "constructivism," which can only lead to catastrophe because the order of the market by definition forbids any attempt to intentionally act on social realities. Hayek constantly reiterates that there can be no collective agreement concerning goals, and one should not try to find one, because all such efforts would result in failure. All managerialism, all planning and all political projects are latently totalitarian! This is what leads Hayek to extremely radical positions, as when he advocates privatizing the issuing of money,[15] justifies monopolies,[16] rejects all macro-economic analysis and goes so far as to assume, in his last book (*Fatal Presumption*), that all socialist systems are doomed to starve their populations to death.[17]

The classical liberal school retained the idea of social justice, at least in the sense of supporting transitory regulations. Hayek completely rejects this in one of the most violent critiques ever written.[18] Social justice, he claims, is a "mirage," an "inept incantation," an "anthropomorphic illusion," an "ontological absurdity." In short, it is a meaningless expression, except in the "tribal order," i.e., within a social space instituted by people with well-defined objectives. To prove this, Hayek redefines *catalaxis* as a social *game*. Being impersonal, the rules of the game are the same for everyone. In this sense, all the players are equal. Obviously, that does not

15. The last pre-monetarist representative of the monetary theories of the cycle, Hayek thinks that by making currency competitive, inflation would be abolished. In *Denationalization of Money: The Argument Refined* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1978), he claims that currency could be printed at will by private enterprises, with consumers experimenting with various currencies until they identify the "best" (assuming they have not been ruined in the meantime). This position was articulated in France by the Club de l'Horloge (see the Club's "Newsletter," No, 2, 1993, p. 7). For a critique of this viewpoint, see Christian Tutin, "Monnaie et Liberalisme: Le Cas Hayek," in Arnaud Berthoud and Roger Frydman, ed., *Le libéralisme économique: interprétations et analyses* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 153-178.

16. While classical liberals were generally in favor of anti-cartel legislation, some neo-liberals, specifically libertarians, today question the idea that there is a close relation between rates of concentration and monopoly effects. See Henri Lepage, *Demain le Libéralisme* (Paris: Livre de Poche-Pluriel, 1980), pp. 241-263.

17. In the same vein, one of Hayek's more extreme disciples goes as far as to write that "all the unpleasant traits of Nazism, including the extermination of minorities, are found in all political societies which seriously seek to achieve social freedom." See François Guillaumat, in *Liberalia* (Spring 1989), p.19. Recalling that as early as 1935 Hayek predicted the "imminent" collapse of the Soviet system, Mark Blaug points out Hayek's inability to make any empirically verifiable political or economic prediction. See his "Hayek Revisited," in *Critical Review* (Winter 1993-94), pp. 51-60. Other authors have remarked that Hayek never provided a precise definition of "totalitarianism" — a term he uses to describe all positions opposed to liberalism.

18. See especially the second volume of *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, *op. cit.*

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imply that they can all win, since in any game there are winners and losers. In addition, since only human behavior resulting from deliberate choices can be regarded as "just" or "injust," it is a logical error to apply these terms to things other than voluntary human acts. Social order can thus be declared just or injust only if it results from voluntary acts. However, Hayek goes out of his way to show that this is not the case. Since the social game has no author, no one is responsible for its results, and it is both childish and ridiculous to claim that it produces "unjustice." Actually, it is no more "injust" to be unemployed than to have failed to choose the winning number in the lottery, because only the players' behavior can be considered just or injust, not the results of such behavior. As the social is not the result of intentions or projects, no one is responsible for the fact that the most underprivileged did not win first prize. Thus "losers" are wrong to complain. Rather than giving in to "atavistic instincts," which lead them to believe naively that every phenomenon has an identifiable cause, or looking for those responsible for the "injustice" they suffer, they would be better off to blame themselves or to admit that their "bad luck" is in the order of things.

Hayek also writes: "The manner in which advantages and burdens are affected by market mechanisms should in many cases be regarded as very unfair *if* this allocation resulted from the deliberate decision of a particular person. But this is not the case." Once this is admitted, the consequence follows. To demand social justice is unrealistic and illusory. To seek social justice is an absurdity which results in the ruin of the legal system (*l'Etat de droit*). Thus Nemo writes matter-of-factly that social justice is "profoundly immoral."[19] The traditional notion of distributive justice is immediately challenged. All notions of instituted solidarity, predicated on the notion of the common good, are also condemned as "tribal archaic revenge." According to Hayek, "the 'grand society' has nothing to do with, and cannot be reconciliated with, solidarity in the true sense of the pursuit of common, known goals." Hayek even rejects equality of luck, for this would nullify differences between "players" before the beginning of the game, which would falsify the results. Of course, unions must also disappear, for they are "incompatible with the foundation of a society of free men." As for those who complain of being alienated by the market

19. *Op. cit.*, p. 188. Similarly, Robert Nozick claims that all voluntary exchange is fair, no matter under what conditions. This is also the case when a worker accepts a miserable wage so as not to starve to death: no one forced him! In his controversial book, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), Nozick defends the thesis of the "minimal state," beginning with an analysis which owes much to game theory.

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order, they are "non-domesticated, non-civilized beings."[20] Here is "liberalism at the service of the people"!

The theory claiming that the market is never unfair because of its impersonal and abstract nature obviously has the advantage of forbidding the measure of reality in terms of concrete results. With the general interest reduced, at best, to maintaining public order and to providing some collective services, and with justice defined in terms of formal-universal rules limited to regulating the agents' behavior, the market cannot be evaluated in terms of its substantial dimension, i.e., according to its results. The same goes for justice, which would have no substantial content because goals do not have their own normativity. In society there is no life "content." Furthermore, since social justice cannot be defined positively, any debate about its essence is useless. The system is thus perfectly "locked." One has to obey the market order because it has not been wanted by anyone and it simply imposed itself. One must follow the established order without trying to understand it or rebelling against it. Similarly, "losers" must develop a new moral whereby "it is only normal to accept the course of events, even when they are unfavorable." This is an unqualified apology for success, no matter what the cause, and at the same time the radical denial of equity in the traditional sense of the term. It is also a perfect way to soothe the conscience of "winners" and to enjoin "losers" from revolting. Hayek's viewpoint thus leads to a "veritable theorization of indifference toward human unhappiness."[21] Ultimately, the market replaces the Leviathan.

The "grand society" turns out to be as unpolitical (*impolitique*) as possible.[22] Public order is seen as resulting without any intentions and no big political project can be grounded on will or reason because there is no social master of the historical process. Ultimately, the rule of the market tends to deprive public power of an object. Against Carl Schmitt, who makes law dependent on authority and political decision, Hayek claims that authority cannot and must not be obeyed except when it applies the law. (There is, however, considerable discretion concerning the nature of legal obligation). At the same time, against Hans Kelsen's legal positivism,

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20. *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 178.

21. Yvon Quinious, "Hayek, les Limites d'un Défi," in *Actuel Marx*, No. 1 (1989), p. 83. Nemo, *op. cit.*, retransposes this indifference as "a non-psychological attachment to abstract others." Hayek writes: "In its purest form, [the ethic of the open society] considers that the first task is to pursue as efficiently as possible a freely chosen goal, without becoming preoccupied with the role it plays in the complicated fabric of human activities." See *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 175.

22. This term is Julien Freund's. See his *Politique et Impolitique* (Paris: Sirey, 1987).

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which identifies norms (*loi*) with the legislator's decision and as the essential source of law (*droit*) and justice, he declares that law has always existed — before legislators' and the state's authority. His praise of common law seeks to demonstrate that law preceded all legislation, which is the foundation of the theory of legal normativism. This is the new basis of the legal system (*Etat de droit*), where the state's only role is to preserve society's "spontaneous order" and to manage its resources. Within such a context, the politician is reduced, at best, to the role of a lifeguard of formal legal rules and to the administrative management of a civil society already ordered by the market. He does not have to produce this society, assign it a goal, spread values or generate cohesion. Hayek vigorously rejects the notion of sovereignty, traditionally defined as indivisible authority (whether the prince's or the people's), in which he sees only a "constructivist superstition": the society which functions best is the one in which no one rules. "In a society of free men," he writes, " in normal times the highest authority must have no power to rule or give any orders whatsoever."[23] Its essential goal is to place public power at the disposal of the "nomocracy." He even denies that there can be "political necessities." Nemo adds: "All things considered, the mere idea of *political power* is incompatible with the concept of a society of free men."[24] Since there is no politics without power, this is clearly a call for the total elimination of the political.

Here democracy is defined in a purely legal and formal manner. Furthermore, Hayek openly claims that his liberalism is only conditionally compatible with democracy. More precisely, he adheres to constitutionalism and to the theory of a representative and limited government. But he has no theory of the state. He knows only "government," which he defines as the "administrator of common resources," i.e., a purely utilitarian device. He adds that democracy is only acceptable as a method of government which does not question any liberal principles. In fact, Hayek's postulate ends up denying democracy understood as a regime with a substantial content (an identity between the ruler and the ruled) and resting on popular sovereignty. Like the market, democracy (or what remains of it) becomes a matter of impersonal rules and of formal procedures without any content.[25]

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23. *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, p. 155.
24. Nemo, *op. cit.*, p. 361.
25. For a critique of the thesis postulating the identity of the rules of conduct of democracy and those of the market, see Gus diZerega, "A Spontaneous Order Model of Democracy: Applying Hayekian Insights to Democratic Theory," paper presented before the Society for the Study of Public Choice, San Francisco (March 1988).

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Hayek vigorously criticizes majority rule, which he sees as an arbitrary principle opposed to individual freedom. According to Nemo, majority rule is valuable as a "method of decision, but not as a source of authority to determine the very content of the decision."[26] From this follows the rejection of the notion of *people* as a political category, the denial of the idea of national sovereignty ("there is no will of the social body that can be sovereign") and the refusal of all forms of direct democracy.[27]

Paradoxically, this "unpolitical" ideal brings Hayek's ideas close to Marxist "constructivism," which criticizes Hegel on the basis of Smith by proclaiming the self-sufficiency of civil society. In the classless society, the withering away of the state ultimately leads to the obsolescence of politics. Marx, who never entirely breaks with a certain individualism, does not consider man as a social being except to the extent that he participates in the construction of society. "Within the Marxist framework," writes Bertrand Nezeys, "socialism must represent the triumph of an individualist society or simply of individualism — private society representing only an alienated form of it."[28] Rosanvallon, who has no problem seeing Marx as "the direct heir of Adam Smith," remarks that "anti-capitalism has become synonymous with anti-liberalism, so that socialism has no other real objective than to fulfill the program of the liberal utopia." Furthermore, "utopian socialism rejects capitalism entirely, but remains blind to the profound meaning of the economic ideology within which it functions. Similarly, liberalism denounces collectivism, but does not see it other than as a radical despotism; it does not analyze it in relation to individualism, in so far as it also conveys the illusion of a depolitized society within which democracy reduces to consensus."[29] It remains to be seen how this ideal is not fundamentally totalitarian, at least if one admits, with Hannah Arendt, that totalitarianism is the desire to dissolve politics more that the desire to extend it everywhere.

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26. Nemo, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

27. The Club de l'Horloge, which follows Hayek, calls at the same time for the extension of direct democracy, and specifically for referenda. This is indefensible within a Hayekian perspective which rejects popular sovereignty and the value of voting.

28. Bertrand Nezeys, *L'autopsie du tiers-mondisme* (Paris: Economica, 1988), p. 130. Louis Dumont argues that Marx's individualism attains its "apotheosis" in *The German Ideology*. See also John Elser, "Marxisme et individualisme méthodologique," in Pierre Birnbaum and Jean Leca, ed., *Sur l'individualisme* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1986).

29. Rosanvallon, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-228.

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III

Hayek's critique of constructivism is closely linked to the representation of the social as an ensemble concerning which individuals can only have incomplete information. But does he draw the right conclusions from this? Obviously, human information is always incomplete. Contrary to Hayek, however, this is also true for the "tribal order," even if the number of parameters is smaller. Furthermore, under the impact of slow processes, of interactions with no clearly identifiable author, human society generates many social facts impossible to link to any particular intentions or projects. Cybernetics and systems theory provide a convincing account of this predicament in ways which relate it to certain intuitions of organicist thought. Moreover, one cannot deny the value of traditions validated by historical experience. Finally, it is obvious that there is frequently a gap between a project and its fulfillment — resulting in unforeseen consequences often regarded as "perverse effects." Yet, this in no way implies the logical impossibility of undertaking any social or political action, or of trying to shape a social order according to a particular goal, without all voluntary actions seeking improvement necessarily making things worse.

At first, Hayek pretends to believe that all constructivism is rationalism, which betrays his "technistic" concept of voluntary acts. Human practice is rarely the result of reasoned examinations of pros and cons. This is clearly the case in the "tribal order," concerning which Hayek says that "instincts" are king. But it is also true of the "grand society," especially in the political domain, where determination of collective goals is inevitably a function of value judgments rarely founded on reason. Next, Hayek argues as if human decisions require knowledge of all parameters, which alone would allow the proper evaluation of consequences and results. This is predicated on complete ignorance of decisions, notably of the fact that, far from translating through a purely linear effect reflecting a kind of omniscience, they constantly undergo corrections — men being always able, after the initial decisions, to multiply subsidiary decisions meant to modify the chain of cause and effect according to new information and preliminary results. "Contrary to what Hayek claims," writes Gérard Roland, "the success of an action does not necessarily depend on complete knowledge of pertinent facts. One can assume that some scientific, technical, economic, political, social, or other action, undertaken during the history of humanity, was not based on such complete knowledge. This is perhaps why no action is totally exempt from error in relation to its initial intention, but this relative lack of knowledge has never

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been an absolute obstacle to the success of an individual or collective human action . . . The process of knowledge is not and has never been totally prior to action. On the contrary, it is closely and dialectically interwoven with it. The failure and success of past actions provide knowledge for future actions, which will succeed or fail in view of this new knowledge, and so on, in a process not necessarily linear and unpredictable, but always marked with the goals people set for themselves."[30]

Actually, the critique of constructivism clashes with common sense, according to which "to analyze suffering, a crisis, or evil, is always to analyze them as a problem, as one which can be solved and whose solution is technical."[31] In this respect, to claim that one cannot or, better yet, must not, correct a situation for which no one is originally responsible, is a pure paralogism. It is actually irresponsible not to act on effects, even if no one is responsible for their cause. Thus the question is not to know if a situation can be judged "just" or "unjust," according to abstract criteria, but rather if it is "just" to accept what is not acceptable for ethical, political or other reasons. Is it imaginable to fail to improve the security of boats or planes under the pretext that "no one is responsible" for the nature of the oceans or of space? By shifting the criteria of "justice" from human subjectivity to the objectivity of the situation, by claiming that a situation has no identifiable culprit in order to conclude that it is impossible to change it, Hayek reveals his personal preferences. But he does not demonstrates that man is by definition *powerless* in relation to a social fact no one wanted.

Finally, Hayek seems to argue that man is not omniscient in order to render him powerless. Yet, man's ability to modify a state of affairs depends much more on the means at his disposal than on the extent of his "information." With Hayek, it is as if the only alternative was between an actually utopian will to reconstruct the whole social order from the bottom up, making a "*tabula rasa* of the past," and a total acceptance of the established order (or disorder). Within this logic of all or nothing — metaphysical because of its aim toward the absolute, all political projects, all will to reform or transform can only appear as an unbearable disruption [*rupturalisme*]. Such an approach feeds into the classical liberal condemnation of the autonomy of politics for the simple reason that, since politics is primarily project and decision, *ultimately there is no politics which is not constructivist.* But it is also a process that can turn against its

30. *Economie politique du système soviétique* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), pp. 19-20.

31. Arnaud Berthoud, "Liberté et libéralisme economique chez Walras, Hayek et Keynes," in Berthoud and Frydman, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

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author. If, as Hayek says, it is actually impossible to anticipate the real results of human actions, so that the most logical attitude is to do nothing to try to change society, it is unclear why it is necessary to try to establish the liberal order, which should unavoidably come about because of its intrinsic excellence and of the advantage it provides to the society which adopts it. It is equally unclear why one should follow Hayek's ideas, e.g., his monetary or constitutional proposals,[32] which entail a more or less radical rupture in relation to the present situation.

Hayek's critique thus boils down to an *incapacitating* system, destined to comfort the worst conservatism. To claim that the market is neither fair nor unfair is tantamount to claiming that its effects should not be judged, that it is the new divinity — the new God in front of which one must bow. Then one must no longer look for values to realize in society, but simply recognize the existing value system which allows one to be a member. One must mind ones's own business without ever calling into question the social order or worrying about the course of history, which can unfold best only without human interference. This is the kind of individual "autonomy" Hayek allows. The individual is emancipated from political power exercised in the name of the social totality only to end up unable to undertake any projects with his peers. Hayek puts it quite forcefully: "Man is not the master of his destiny and never will be." Man can do what he wants, but he will not know how to want what he does. The object of a society which only functions well on its own is thus defined in terms of powerlessness and submission. According to Hayek, freedom can only be exercised within the context of that which denies it. Thus it is not an exaggeration to say that man is thereby deprived of his humanity because, if there is a fundamental characteristic which distinguishes human beings from animals, it is the ability to conceive and realize collective projects. By depriving humanity of this ability, by turning market monotheism into the new "empire of necessity," Hayek surreptitiously regresses to the "pre-tribal" stage of pure animality.[33]

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32. Hayek favors a separation of legislative powers, anticipating the institution of a high chamber, which would function as a kind of a constitutional council. It would be reserved for individuals over 45 years of age who have demonstrated their "honesty," "wisdom," and "judgment," and who would be elected for fifteen years. See F. A. Hayek, "Whither Democracy?" in Nishiyama and Leube, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 352-362.

33. See Gilles Leclercq, "Hier le libéralisme," in *Procès* (1986), pp. 83-100, who also sees liberalism as "a doctrine of a subtly totalitarian essence." For a similar critique from a social Christian viewpoint, see Michel Schooyans, *La dérive totalitaire du libéralisme* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1991).

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Here it is clear that it is impossible to use Hayek's analysis to return to tradition. Actually, Hayek only praises tradition in an instrumental context, in order to legitimate an order based on the market. In his eyes, traditions can only be valuable if they constitute "pre-rational regulations," which have favored the emergence of an impersonal and abstract order where the market constitutes the most advanced result. When he speaks about traditions favorably, it is to evoke the slow evolution of societies toward modernity, the sedimentation of usages which have allowed (at least in the West) the "grand society" to triumph. Thus all other traditions can only be rejected. There is, however, a contradiction in principle between traditions that, by definition, are always part of particular cultures, and the universality of the formal rules Hayek advocates. Since, as it is commonly admitted, Western modernity has rolled over all traditions everywhere, it is easy to see here that Hayek's "traditionalism" only relates to the tradition . . . of the extinction of traditions.

In this regard, Hayek remains true to some of his predecessors' perspectives, in particular David Hume's, to whom he frequently refers. In the 18th century, in his *Political Essays*, Hume already criticized Locke and those like him, who accorded too important a place to reason: by itself, reason is unable to oppose the passions. The latter can only be channeled by "non arbitrary artifices," which are not the result of a preestablished design. Among these non-arbitrary artifices are habits, customs and institutions sanctified by use. Justice is itself a "grown institution," while custom turns out to be the best substitute for reason in guiding human practice. Thus the emphasis on traditions allows him to hold back passions, all the while economizing on the fiction of the social contract. For Hume, however, institutions are not the result of a "selection" during the course of history. If they are not arbitrary, it is because they correspond to the general principles of understanding.[34]

The real nature of Hayek's "traditionalism" clearly appears in his critique of the "tribal order," whose different forms of constructivism constitute so many anachronistic resurgences. The "tribal order" is actually nothing more than *traditional* society as opposed to modern society, or *community* as opposed to *society*. In fact, all of the organic and holistic characteristics of traditional and communitarian societies are condemned by Hayek as traits antagonistic to the "grand society." The tradition he

34. On Hume as a precursor of liberalism, see D. Deleule, *Hume et la naissance du libéralism* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1979). For a dissenting viewpoint, see Daniel Diatkine, "Hume et le libéralisme économique," in Berthoud and Frydman, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-19.

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defends knows neither collective goals nor the common good; neither social values nor a shared symbolical imaginary. In short, it is a "tradition" deemed valuable only to the extent that it is born out of the break-up of "archaic" societies. Paradoxically, it is anti-traditional thought camouflaged as the "defense of traditions"!

According to Yvan Blot, "a liberalism of the traditionalist kind is national, because the nation itself comes out of tradition and not from an arbitrary construction of the spirit."[35] This statement presupposes a double misunderstanding. On the one hand, the modern idea of the nation is truly an "arbitrary construction of the spirit," because it is first and foremost a creation of Enlightenment philosophy and of the French Revolution — the kingdom of France, which historically preceded it, having itself been constructed in a manner necessarily voluntarist and "constructivist" by the Capetian dynasty. On the other hand, it is common knowledge that Hayek's or any other liberalism cannot assign a privileged place to the nation, because its concept of the social does not operate in a politically bound territory but in a market. For the mercantilists, the "national" *territory* and economic *space* were still confused and Smith, in his *Wealth of Nations*, sharply differentiates these two concepts. For Smith, the boundaries of the market are constantly constructed and modified, no longer coinciding with the static boundaries of the nation or the kingdom: it is the domain of the market, no longer that of the territory, which is the real key to wealth. As such, as Rosanvallon put it, Smith is "the first consistent internationalist." After Smith, the same postulate will be advocated once again by the whole liberal tradition. While the nation can provide citizens with an identity, it cannot become the criterion of economic activity nor can it control or limit exchanges. Consequently, it is impossible to bring together legal, political, and economic spaces within a given territory and under a particular authority. From the viewpoint of economic activity, there cannot be any boundaries: *laissez-faire*, *laissez-passer*. Correlatively, the merchant is no longer anything but an economic entity. According to Smith: "A merchant is not necessarily a citizen of any particular country. He is largely indifferent where he carries out his business, and only the slightest disgust is necessary for him to decide to take his capital from one country to another, and with it all the industry that capital financed."[36] This statement captures all the ambiguity of "national-liberalism."

35. In *Présent* (October 6, 1989).
36. See Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. I, Book 3, chapter 4.

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IV

Coming back to Hayek's concept of the market, by instrumentalizing traditions, to resolve the question of the foundation of obligation in the social pact by the legitimacy of the market. This is a constant preoccupation in liberal thought. The point is always to find a natural foundation for the social order: "sympathy" with Smith, "custom" for Hume, etc. This poses the problem of the "state of nature" hypothesis, which in Locke's thought is resolved by means of the deployment of the fiction of a primitive scene: the social contract. As already indicated, in Smith's line of thought, this fiction is useless: the "invisible hand," whose intervention produces the necessary market adjustments, also explains the permanence of the social order. Unlike other liberal authors, however, Hayek does not simply regard the market as "natural." On the contrary, he recognizes that it comes about at a particular time in history. Yet, it is only this coming into being that he considers *natural*: without originally being a natural phenomenon, the market is supposed to appear "naturally" under the impact of a gradual automatic selection. Hayek's naturalism relies on the idea of inevitable progress based on objective laws unshackled by cultural evolution.

Hayek's cleverness consists in this: by combining the evolutionist theory and the doctrine of the "invisible hand," the "naturality" of the market it established without having to posit it as original. He does away with the idea of a natural order or self-evident truth. At the same time, he appropriates the liberal postulate according to which there are objective laws such as the free interaction of individual strategies leading not only to order but to *the best* possible one. As such, however, he does not avoid the classic aporia of liberal thought in explaining how a viable social order can be constituted solely on the basis of individual sovereignty. The difficulty is "to presuppose the presence of the whole in each part. If the social was not already, in any way, contained in the parts, it is hard to see how they could agree."[37] Then the necessary postulate is that of a continuity of the parts with the whole. However, this does not work, if for no other reason than Bertrand Russell's theory of logical types ("a class cannot be a member of itself, anymore than one of its members can be the class"). In other words, there is necessarily a discontinuity between the

37. See Roger Frydman, "Individu et totalité dans la pensée libérale: Le cas de F. A. Hayek," in Berthoud and Frydman, *op. cit.*, p. 98. This is particularly true of theories based on the hypothesis of the social contract: in order for isolated individuals to contractually decide to enter into society, they must have already had at least an approximate knowledge of its results, in which case the state of nature can no longer be rigorously opposed to the social state.

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whole and its parts, and this poses problems for liberal pretenses.

Hayek's vision of a "primitive" man living in the "tribal order," while rather different from that of Hobbes or Locke, or even Rousseau, is otherwise anthropologically trivial. To regard traditional societies as privileging voluntarist ("constructivist") behavior is questionable, because these societies are governed precisely by traditions seeking to reproduce themseves. On the contrary, it can be argued that it is the "grand society" which welcomes new projects and deliberate designs. In other words, it is traditional and "tribal" societies which come about spontaneously, while modern societies are *instituted.* Alain Caillé rightly observes that, to make freedom a function of conformity to the traditional order "leads paradoxically to the conclusion that the only just society conceivable is a closed one rather than the Liberal Grand Society."[38] By definition, the society whose "*themis*" is closest to "*nomos*" is actually a closed traditional society (open, however, to the cosmos): from Hayek's viewpoint, it is even more "just" (or, rather, even less "unjust") in that it seeks to perpetuate its identity by founding itself on usage.

The idea according to which long-lasting institutions are the result of "men's action, but not their designs," is not any less questionable. The English Right, frequently cited as a typical example of an institution based on custom, was really born in a relatively authoritarian and brutal manner "following royal and parliamentary interventions, and it is the result of the creative work of lawyers belonging to the centralized administration of justice."[39] More generally, the whole English liberal order is the result of the 17th century conflict between Parliament and the Crown rather than of spontaneous evolution.

As for the market, if it is not the natural form of exchange. Its birth cannot be related to a slow evolution of customs and institutions free of all "constructivism." Rather, the opposite is the case: the market constituting a typical example of an *instituted* order. As already indicated, the logic of the market, a phenomenon both particular and recent, does not come into being until the end of the Middle Ages, when the emerging states, concerned with monetarizing economies in order to increase their fiscal resources, began to unify local and long distance commerce at the heart of "national" markets they could more easily control. In Western Europe, France in particular, the market, far from being a reaction against

38. See Alain Caillé, *Splendeur et misère des sciences sociales: Esquisses d'une mythologie* (Genève: Droz, 1986), p. 340.

39. Blandine Barret-Kriegel, *L'etat et les esclaves* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1980), p. 115.

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the state, came into being through its initiative. Only subsequently did it emancipate itself from "national" borders and constraints, with the gradual growth of the autonomy of economics. Strictly a voluntary creation, at the beginning the market was one of the means the nation-state used to dispose of the feudal order. It sought to facilitate fiscal practices in the modern sense of the term (non-market, intra-communitarian exchanges were intractable). This entailed the gradual elimination of autonomous organic communities and, consequently, centralization. In this way, both the nation-state and the market favored an atomized society where individuals are gradually disentangled from all intermediary socialization.

Finally, Hayek's dichotomy between spontaneous and instituted order is untanable. It simply never existed. To say that society evolves spontaneously amounts to claiming that it is transformed by the sole impact of man's voluntary actions. The claim that the logic of spontaneous order could not interfere with that of the instituted order without resulting in catastrophic consequences is also completely arbitrary. The history of humanity is the result of such an interplay. The claim that the formation of the social order is the result of "unconscious" practices, independent of all goals or collective aims, is simply wrong. There has never been such a society. The self-organization of society is both more complex and less spontaneous than Hayek claims. If rules and traditions influence human life, one cannot overlook, without falling into a purely linear and mechanical vision, that men, in turn, also affect rules and traditions. When all is said and done, Hayek does not see that societies are *never* instituted only on the basis of spontaneous practices and individual interests, but first in the symbolic order, on the basis of values whose representation always implies a gap with respect to this practice.

The question also arises concerning how one moves from the "tribal" and traditional order to that of the "grand society." Although essential for his argument, Hayek does elaborate this point. How could a particular society, say, a communitarian and holistic one, "naturally" give birth to an essentially individualistic society — a society of the *opposite* type? It is possible to answer this question by following Louis Dumont, i.e., by describing the emergence of modernity as the result of the slow process of secularization of Christian ideology. But Hayek never pays much attention to ideological factors and, at any rate, it would be problematic for his thesis to claim that the "grand society" came out of a "constructivist" rupture. (Actually, what is more constructivist than the will to create a new religion?). This is why he falls back on the evolutionist scheme, i.e., to a

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social Darwinism entailed by the idea of progress.

Of course, Hayek does not fall into a crude biologism. His Social Darwinism, carefully outlined in *The Constitution of Liberty*, consists primarily in positing human history as the reflection of a cultural evolution functioning according to the model of biological evolution. As in all liberalism, economic competition is seen as advancing progress just as, in the animal kingdom, the "struggle for life" is supposed to pave the way for selection. Traditions, institutions and social facts are also explained in this manner. Similarly, there is a constant surreptitious shift from facts to norms: liberal society and the market economy are *values* since they have been "naturally selected" in the course of evolution. Value is thus a function of success. This view is particularly explicit in Hayek's last book,[40] where capitalism is seen not so much in terms of its economic efficiency but as the *non plus ultra* of human evolution. This identification of value with success is typical of all evolutionary visions of history. If evolution "selects" what is best adapted to the conditions of the moment, all that has happened in history can only be regarded in an approving and optimistic manner. Selection sanctifies the best — the proof that they are the best being that they have been selected. The replacement of the "tribal order" by the "grand society," the rise of modernity, the success of individualism over holism, are thus part of the order of things. In other words, the state of evolution reflects exactly what *must* be. Human history can then be read as *progress*, reinterpreted by Hayek as the march of "freedom."[41] "In a universe without progress," writes Henri Lepage, "freedom would have no *raison d'être* . . ."

Obviously, the parallel between cultural and biological evolution

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40. Hayek defines social evolution in terms of the emergence of increasingly complex societies in a way reminiscent of Herbert Spencer, who already identified evolution and progress. On the other hand, some libertarians have criticized Hayek's idea of a "natural selection" of institutions. See Timothy Virkkala, "Reason and Evolution," in *Liberty* (September 1989), pp. 57-61; and David Ramsay Steele, "Hayek's Theory of Cultural Group Selection," in *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, pp. 171-195. "The idea of cultural evolution, or of natural selection of groups according to their practices," writes John Gray, "remains extremely obscure. What is the unity implied in cultural evolution and how does it function? Like Marxism, the Hayekian theory of cultural evolution neglects historical contingency (the fact, e.g., that certain religions disappear, not because they present a less Darwinian advantage in relation to their rivals, but because the power of the state persecutes them) . . . This is why his attempts to justify the political ideals of classical liberalism by means of an evolutionist or synthetic philosophy end in failure, just as with Herbert Spencer before him." See "The Road from Serfdom," in *National Review* (April 27, 1992), pp. 36-37.

41. "With time, and some regressions, history chooses the winners. This thesis may be already familiar: Francis Fukuyama's best-seller about the end of history owes at least as much to Hayek as to Hegel." See "In Praise of Hayek," in *The Economist* (March 28, 1992), p. 77).

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raises methodological problems, beginning with the question as to what the liberal order is best "adapted." From this viewpoint, Hayek's almost mechanical application of the theory of natural selection to social values and institutions does not escape the criticism that the theory is tautological. As Frydman remarks, "the utilitarian-evolutionary perspective which inscribes cultural developments in a finalized sequence is either trivial or unverifiable. It is trivial because human institutions are necessarily adequate for the goals or the survival of each society that produces them. It is unverifiable because, if it is proper to claim that institutions are adapted, and not even necessarily as a whole and always relatively in terms of particular objectives, there is no escape from this vicious circle in order to be able to say that these are the best, or the fittest which were ultimately selected."[42] According to Jean-Pierre Dupuy, if Hayek "had followed to the end logical and systems theories of self-organization, of which he was from the beginning an advocate, he would have understood that they cannot be accommodated to the vicious circles of neo-Darwinism on the subject of the survival of the fittest."[43]

This evolutionary model also clashes with Western particularity which, as in all ethnocentric viewpoints, is posed as the embodiment of normality, while, on the contrary, it is the exception. Hayek never explains why the liberal order and the market were not "selected" as the most adequate forms of life in any society other than in the West. He also does not explain why, in other parts of the world, social order "spontaneously" evolved in other directions . . . or did not evolve at all.[44] More generally, Hayek does not seem to realize that all forms of "spontaneous" order, including those in the West, are not necessarily compatible with liberal principles. A social system can evolve "spontaneously" toward a traditional or "reactionary" order as well as toward a liberal one. It is also by arguing for the "natural character" of traditions that the counter-revolutionary school, represented mainly by Bonald and Maistre, develops its critique of liberalism and pleads for theocracy and absolute monarchy. Hayek reasons as if common sense were spontaneously liberal, which clashes with historical experience, and as if it developed autonomously, while one of the characteristics of modern society is precisely its heteronomy. It cannot be otherwise: if the rise of the liberal order is not solely explained by "natural selection," its entire system immediately collapses.

42. "Individu et totalité dans la pensée libérale," *op. cit.*.
43. "L'individu libéral, cet inconnu," *op. cit.*, p. 119.
44. On this, see John Gray, *Hayek on Liberty*, *op. cit.*

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In fact, however, the market order has not been "selected" everywhere. Then how can one claim that the selection from which this order is supposed to result is "natural?" Moreover, how can one show that this order is the best there is? Here, the difficulty for Hayek is to go from stating a supposed fact to stating a norm. From the claim that institutions cannot be the product of voluntary human designs (allegedly a fact), he concludes that there must be no attempt to transform them (a norm). From the claim that institutions are the result of a cultural evolution functioning according to the model of biological evolution (allegedly a fact), he concludes that such a result necessarily constitutes progress (a norm). But then he becomes caught in a classic aporia: "is" is not equivalent to "should be." In reality, Hayek knows very well that his preference for a system of particular values, in this case the liberal order, cannot be logically grounded. This is why he conceals his *choice* behind evolutionary considerations, which confers upon his reasoning an air of objectivity. Furthermore, there is a contradiction between claiming that all moral rules are equal in that they result from a "selection" guaranteeing their adaptation to social life, and Hayek's need to show that liberal society is objectively the best. The question here is whether the liberal order is the best because of its intrinsic qualities, or because it has been "sanctified" by evolution. These are totally different things. If the answer is that the liberal order is the best because it has been "naturally selected" in the course of history, it is then necessary to explain why it was not selected everywhere and why, moreover, completely different orders were selected. If, on the other hand, the answer is that it is the best because of its own merits (the position of the classic liberal school), then the market is no longer a norm but a model, i.e., a system among others, and it is no longer possible to demonstrate its excellence by relying on a fact external to these virtues, in this case, evolution.

Hayek cannot escape this dilemma other than by falling back once again on that utilitarianism which he claimed to have left behind, i.e., by claiming that the market no longer constitutes a means to coordinate all human activities without any plans, that it is simply the generic model of organization most conducive to human development. Thus he does not avoid recourse to this process when he explains that the "grand society" came about "because the most efficient institutions prevailed in a competitive process." But such reasoning implies a double inconvenience. On the one hand, it leads back to a totally arbitrary judgement: to claim that all human aspirations boil down to a principle of efficiency which allows the best to materially enrich themselves is simply another way of saying that

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there is no higher value than this enrichment (while Hayek claims that the economy does not have as its main goal the creation of wealth). But then, on the other hand, it is no longer clear what is the advantage of a market defined as an epistemological tool allowing access to a global order. If the superiority of the market actually rests only in its ability to produce wealth, and if the first priority is self-enrichment, there is no longer any reason for those who fail to be satisfied with their lot or to find the unequal distribution of goods "normal." Thus Caillé poses the right question: "Does not making market efficiency the criteria and the goal of justice amount to reintroducing in its very definition considerations allegedly done away with?"[45] By falling back on a utilitarian appreciation of the market, Hayek renders null and void all he has said about the "non-injustice" of the "grand society."

Hayek's critique of utilitarianism appears the least ambiguous. Linked, along with that of rationalism and positivism, to the denunciation of "constructivism," it aims at best for the "straight utilitarianism" of a Jeremy Benthan, who defines general happiness as the happiness of the greatest number. According to Hayek, this definition remains too tied to the idea of the common good. It actually legitimates the logic of sacrifice, which it closely relates to a numeric quantity. Pareto proposed the principle that, if some people can bring about a social transformation without others suffering from it, then this transformation is to be recommended. Bentham's utilitarianism transgresses this principle by going too far. If what is essential is the satisfaction of the majority, it can be argued that a transformation which improves the gains of the greatest number while worsening the losses of a small number is still justified. Hayek rejects the idea that the sacrifice of a few is legitimate if it contributes to the advantage of all others (which is also one of the points of the victimological mechanism of the theory of the scapegoat),[46] simply because he does not allow the notion of "collective utility," even if defined as the simple aggregation of individual utilities. Here his position is indistinguishable from that of Robert Nozick or even John Rawls, according to whom: "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice upon which even the good of society considered as a whole cannot prevail. For this reason, the deprivation of the freedom of some people cannot be justified by a larger good that others would receive in return. It is incompatible with freedom

45. *Op. cit.*, p. 315.

46. In the Gospel, the high priest Caiaphas argues that: "It is better for one man to die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (John 11:49-50).

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to admit that sacrifices imposed on some people can be compensated by the increase of the advantages that a large number would receive."[47] But is this refusal sincere? When Hayek proposes to the losers in the catalactic "game" that they should accept their lot as the least "unfair" option, is he not somehow calling on them to sacrifice themselves for the proper functioning of the general order of the market? There is an ambiguity here which leads back to the already discussed "impure individualism." Hayek opposes individualism to utilitarianism but, despite himself, he falls into this same utilitarianism each time he boasts of the efficiency of the "invisible hand," each time he legitimates the market in terms of its intrinsic merits, or when he identifies success as the highest value.[48]

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This is how Caillé defines the two aporias of liberal critical rationalism: "The first comes from the fact that critical reason is not self-sufficient. In order to be critical, reason must find something other than itself to criticize and this something cannot be something purely negative. The second aporia follows from the first. Critical reason does not come to believe it can exhaust the real, unless it supposes that it boils down to a negative rationale, which would constitute its only identity. Liberal critical reason is thus based on an identitarian representation of social relations, which contradicts the idea of freedom."[49]

Max Weber has shown that there is always a contradiction between formal and substantial rationality, and that the two can always come into conflict. Thus the problem of the substantial content of freedom cannot be dealt with by simply focusing of the procedures which are supposed to guarantee it. Here the hypothesis of spontaneous adjustments of the economic and social agents' various competing projects within a context of total freedom of exchange — optimal adjustments not in an *ideal* but in a *possible* sense, i.e., in reference to the real cognitive life-conditions of the social members — presupposing there are no irreducible antagonisms concerning interests, destructive market crises, etc., turns out to be profoundly utopian. In fact, the very idea that the values of freedom and of a

47. *Théorie de la justice* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).

48. Significant here is Hayek's definition of the distribution imparted by the market: "To each according to the usefulness of his contribution as it is seen by others." Some liberal authors do not hesitate to locate Hayek among the theoreticians of utilitarianism. See, e.g., Leland B. Yeager, "Utility, Rights, and Contract. Some Reflections on Hayek's Work," in Leube and Slabinger, eds., *The Political Economy of Freedom*, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-80.

49. *Op. cit.*, pp. 340-341.

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spontaneous order arising out of practice can be fused rests on a representation of society without any public space.

As already indicated, Hayek does not hesitate to claim, along with classical liberals, that the market maximizes the well-being of all. He claims it constitutes a "game" which increases the chances of all players, considered individually, to achieve their individual goals. This claim clashes with an obvious objection: how can the market maximize the chances of individuals to achieve their goals if in principle these goals cannot be known? At any rate, as Caillé writes, "if such were the case . . . it would be easy to maintain that the market economy has multiplied the goals of individuals more than their means to realize these goals; it has, according to the psychological mechanism analyzed by Tocqueville, increased dissatisfaction. This is a sort of reminder that the goals of individuals do not fall from the sky but come from the social and cultural system within which they find themselves. Thus it is unclear why, e.g., the members of a savage society could not have infinitely more chances to realize their individual goals than those of the "grand society." Hayek would probably reply that the savages were not 'free' to choose their own objectives. This would be as difficult to demonstrate as that modern individuals determine themselves."[50]

The representation of *catalaxis* as a game providing "impersonal" chances and in which it is normal for there to be winners and losers is in reality untenable. The existence of abstract rules does not actually suffice to guarantee that everyone will have the same chance to win or lose. Hayek forgets that the chance to win is not the same for all, and that the losers are often always the same ones. Hence, the results of the game cannot be regarded as uncertain. In order for them to become uncertain, it would be necessary for the game to be "corrected" by the willful intervention of public power, which Hayek vigorously rejects. What is one to think of a game where, as if by chance, the winners keep winning, while the losers keep losing? According to Hayek, to charge that the spontaneous order is "unjust" is tantamount to falling into anthropomorphism or "animism," even in the logic of the scapegoat, because it would be like looking for someone responsible or guilty, where no one is. But, as Jean-Pierre Dupuy has noted, here the argument backfires because, if there is a decisive acquisition in the process of social evolution, it is that it is now generally ackowledged that it is not fair to condemn an innocent person. From this

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-321.

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viewpoint, it is rather the denial of the mere notion of social injustice which calls for pause. In seeking to avoid the logic of the scapegoat, Hayek himself becomes guilty of it: in his system, not only are scapegoats simply the victims of social injustice, they are even forbidden to complain. To claim that social justice means nothing amounts to transforming the victims of injustice into scapegoats of a theory of its legitimation. Then the sophism consists in saying that social order is neither just nor unjust, while concluding that we must accept it as it is, i.e., as though it were just.

Here, the ambiguity comes from occasionally posing the market as intrinsically the creator of freedom (the basis of his thesis), while at times posing freedom as a means of the generalized efficiency of the market. But, then, what is the real goal — individual freedom or economic efficiency? Hayek would probably say that these two objectives are really only one and the same. Yet, it has to be shown how they operate in relation to one another. In fact, Hayek's definition of freedom shows how ultimately it is the latter, whose function is to guarantee the market, which becomes an end in itself. For Hayek, freedom is neither an attribute of human nature nor a complement of reason but an historical achievement, a value brought into being by the "grand society." Furthermore, it is a purely individual, negative and homogenous freedom. Hayek goes so far as to say that freedom is suffocated where *various* freedoms are pleaded.[51] Thus the market only creates the conditions for freedom because freedom is put at the market's disposal. As such, the ethic of freedom is turned into the ethic of well-being, which amounts to falling once again into utilitarianism. Hayek proposes only one instrumental vision of freedom: it is valuable only to the extent that it allows the functioning of the market.

Lastly, to identify the market with the social order reveals a most reductive *economism*. As Frydman put it: "The market is inevitably an economy. It forms a system which presupposes continuity between a social arrangement and the objectives it can satisfy. In order for the market to function, it must itself be founded on a social relation able to translate itself into quantifiable language and be able to propose market ends, or at least transform them into monetary and profitable guidelines for enterprises. As such, we cannot avoid the obligation to ground a market society on its economic performance, and in return to select the rules of fair play according to these same objectives."[52] When all is said and

51. "Liberties appear only when liberty is lacking. See *The Constitution of Liberty*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

52. "Individu et totalité dans la pensée libérale," *op. cit.*, p. 120.

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done, the only thing defensible is "legislation adequate to the mode of existence of products of human activity such as commodities, worked out within a competitive process."[53] Such is also Caillé's conclusion: "The slight of hand of liberal ideology, of which Hayek provides the best example, is in the identification of a state based on law with the market, in its reduction to the role of the market. As such, the plea for individual freedom boils down to real obligations, which is to have no other goals than those of the market."[54]

Liberal doctrine claims that all can be bought and sold in a self-regulated market. As Rosanvallon put it, this economistic ideology "translates the fact that relations between men are understood as relations between market values." As such, it subscribes to the denial of the traditional difference, recognized at least since Aristotle, between economics and politics or, rather, it only grasps this difference in order to invert relations of subordination between the first and the second. It leads, then, to what Lepage calls the "generalized economy," i.e., the reduction of the social dimension to an economic (liberal) model, by means of a process founded on a methodological individualism which legitimates itself with the conviction that, "if, as economic theory claims, economic agents behave in as relatively *rational* way and generally pursue their best preference in matters of producing, investing, consuming, there is no reason to think that it works differently in other social activities; e.g., when it is a matter of electing a representative, choosing a profession, then a career, taking a spouse, having children, foreseeing their education . . . The paradigm of *homo oeconomicus* is thus used not only to explain the logic of production or consumption but also to explore the ensemble of social relations based on the interaction of decisions and individual actions."[55]

Hayek's efforts differ from classical liberalism because of his attempt to re-ground the doctrine at the highest possible level without recourse to the fiction of the social contract and by attempting to avoid the critiques usually made of rationalism, utilitarianism, the postulate of a general equilibrium or of pure and perfect competition founded on the transparency of information. In order to do this, Hayek is forced to raise the stakes and to turn the market into a global concept necessary because of its totalizing character. The result is a new utopia, predicated on as many paralogisms and contradictions. Actually, as Caillé put it, were it not for "the

53. *Ibid.*
54. *Op. cit.*, p. 347.
55. Lepage, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

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welfare state's failure to achieve social peace, the market order would have been swept away a long time ago." A society based on Hayek's principles would explode in a short time. Furthermore, its institution can only be the product of a pure "constructivism" and would undoubtedly require a dictatorial state. As Albert O. Hirschman writes, "this allegedly idyllic privatized citizenship, which only pays attention to its economic interests and indirectly serves the public interest without ever playing a direct role — all of this can only be achieved within nightmarish political conditions."[56] That today "national thought" is being reinvigorated by this type of theory says a lot about the collapse of this thought.

56. *Vers une économie politique élargie* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 27.

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Adorno, Greenberg and Modernist Politics

Nancy Jachec

Despite widespread pessimism about the radical thrust of Adorno's modernism and Adorno's own reservations, his work has been held up as prefiguring the rebirth of a more engaged politics. This argument has taken several forms. Russell A. Berman maintains that if Adorno's modernism was bound to exhaust itself (as Adorno himself anticipated),[1] the end of modernism would inevitably result in a return to everyday life. Yet this union of art and life would simply relocate political struggle and change within the cultural arena: "After the completion of the avant-garde project, works of art have lost their privileged status and are no longer a safe harbor for the utopian image of a successful civilization, but the principle of aestheticization expands throughout society as a crucial medium of manipulation. . . . The congruence of society and art remains valid today, but in a new sense . . . the aestheticization of everyday life as a crucial mechanism of control suggests the ubiquity of the signs of political power. As aesthetic manipulation expands into all facets of social activity, manipulation can be confronted from any point within aestheticized society."[2]

A similar, if more cautious optimism is also voiced by Peter Osborne. While emphasizing that postmodernism is "a timely reminder of the absolute

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1. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. by Christian Lenhardt, ed. by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 51-55 and 337-340. See also Terry Eagleton, "Art After Auschwitz," *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford, Blackwell Press, 1990), p. 351; and Peter Bürger, "The Decline of the Modern Age," in *Telos*, no. 62 (Winter, 1984-85), p. 122.

2. Russell A. Berman, "Modern Art and Desublimation," in *Telos*, No. 62 (Winter, 1984-85), pp. 53-54.

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dependence of aesthetic revolutions on the success of broader social and political movements of which they are a part,"[3] Osborne maintains that, if Adorno's dialectical projections for modernism as self-exhausting are to be held at bay, then the definition of the perpetual process of "renewal" in Adorno's modernism needs to be expanded into a "variegated modernism," understood as tolerance for more diversity as opposed to a linear process of formal interrogation. Not to be confused with "aesthetic pluralism," variegated modernism allegedly allows a diversity of unspecified practices. On the whole, however, commentators attempting to read a radical legacy into Adorno's aesthetics are content with its location on a cultural as opposed to a political terrain. But if modernism openly disavowed practical politics in favor of utopia and its abstract ideal, the question remains concerning how it relates to contemporary liberal politics.[4]

This is problematic, particularly as Adorno himself defined emancipation — the autonomy or alienation of modern art — as necessarily disengaged and part and parcel of contemporary liberalism: "There is no doubt that art was in some sense more directly a social thing before its emancipation than after. Autonomy, art's growing independence from society, is a function of the bourgeois consciousness of freedom. . . ."[5] Moreover, there are problems with extrapolating Adorno as a spokesman for either modern or postmodern visual culture. *Aesthetic Theory* is about art in general; its paradigmatic modernists were Klee and Picasso, whose work dates back to the first half of this century.[6] Consequently, if this is taken both as a defense of modernism and as bridging the gap between the utopianism of Western Marxism in the 1940s-50s and the cultural radicalism of the postmodern period[7] — generally assumed to have began in the 1960s — the politics of modernism during this period as a whole need examination. For it was from the 1940s to the 1960s that "the modernist paradigm" (which understood modernist art as experimental, autonomous and relentlessly innovative, yet guided by the subjective and

3. Peter Osborne, "Adorno and the Metaphysics of Modernism: The Problem of a 'Postmodern' Art," in Andrew Benjamin, ed., *The Problems of Modernity* (London, Routledge, 1989), pp. 42-45.

4. See David Roberts, *Art and Enlightenment: Aesthetic Theory After Adorno* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), pp. 158-159; and Jay Bernstein's introduction to Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 23.

5. Adorno, *op. cit.*, pp. 320-322.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 363-364.

7. See, e.g., Jay Bernstein, "The Death of Sensuous Particulars: Adorno and Abstract Expressionism," in *Radical Philosophy* 76 (March/April 1996), pp. 7-19.

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rational individual) was articulated not only by Adorno[8] but also by another less fashionable modernist thinker — Clement Greenberg.

According to one of his editors, Adorno began thinking about writing a book on aesthetics in 1956, but only began the dictation of *Aesthetic Theory* in 1961. The manuscript was essentially completed in 1967, its appearance in a final version thwarted only by Adorno's death in 1969.[9] Although the evolution of Greenberg's paradigm took place during the 1940s and 1950s, it was guided by interests not unlike Adorno's. They shared similar, if not identical socio-political roots within post-war liberal ideology. While he considered himself a socialist until 1947, Greenberg had renounced dialectical materialism already in 1942, gradually moving toward the qualified liberal positivism of his close associate, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. — one of the chief architects of post-war liberal ideology.[10] A political historian and commentator, in the 1950s Schlesinger became a speech-writer and adviser to Adlai Stevenson and later, in the early 1960s, to John F. Kennedy. In the 1940s and 1950s, however, he was a regular contributor to *Partisan Review*.[11] Both he and Greenberg were members of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, established in 1950 to guide American liberalism away from its 1930s version considered too soft on communism and too ideological.[12] The evolution of Greenberg's thinking on the Left and positivism, and his relation to Schlesinger from the early 1940s to the 1960s, shows how the modernist paradigm developed as part of Greenberg's transition from a socialist to an ardent supporter of post-war liberal ideology. The latter espoused an essentially positivist approach to social, economic and political planning, i.e., pragmatic, piecemeal and open to scientific and technological advances seen, however as not leading *inevitably* to social improvement.[13]

8. Adorno, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 and 55-63.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 494-495.
10. Clement Greenberg, "An Inquiry on Dialectical Materialism," in *Dyn*, July-August 1942, pp. 108-109, reprinted in O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 1: *Perceptions and Judgments* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1986).
11. Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), p. 131.
12. Greenberg was also an executive of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom from April 1952 to October 1953. See John O'Brien, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism:* Vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 321-322. See also Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 61-115.
13. See Anthony Giddens, *Positivism and Sociology* (London: Heinemann, 1974), pp. 2-22.

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In short, while adhering to the Enlightenment project, it was critical of its optimism and cautious concerning its benefits. Moreover, its supporters, e.g., Daniel Bell and Daniel Boorstin, unanimously opposed ideology, which they identified with the determinism of Soviet Diamat, in favor of piecemeal social engineering of existing political and social institutions.

Although it would be wrong to present Adorno as a positivist or a liberal ideologist, the irony in their similarities highlights the complicity with contemporary liberalism entailed by both his and Greenberg's expectations for modernism as a political aesthetic. As for Greenberg's modernism, positivism was the philosophical basis for his transition from a self-styled, independent socialism to post-war liberalism — a migration strongly influenced by the same concerns of many members of the Frankfurt School at the time. Along with many of the latter, Adorno was also living in the US when the paradigm began to develop. For his part, Greenberg can be considered part of that Western Marxist intellectual culture typical of New York City at the time, even having direct contact with the work of critical theorists. From its inception in 1945 and throughout the 1950s, he was an associate editor of *Commentary* which, although now generally regarded as an arch-liberal magazine due to the anti-Communist reputation it acquired in the 1950s, was originally set up by the American Jewish Committee to examine the political and sociological origins of the Holocaust, and employed revisionist Marxist analytical categories to this end. The American Jewish Committee also commissioned the massive *Studies in Prejudice* (1949-50)[14] — a five-volume project, which brought together many Frankfurt School members, such as Leo Löwenthal and, as an associate, Bruno Bettelheim, with a number of American sociologists, such as Samuel Flowerman, *Commentary*'s associate editor Nathan Glazer, Norbert Guterman and C. Wright Mills. Not surprisingly, *Commentary* was a regular venue for the work of other Institute members throughout the 1940s.

More importantly, *Commentary* operated within the same general framework as *Studies in Prejudice*, from which it regularly published material. Directed by Max Horkheimer, the latter was predicated on the assumption, shared by Adorno, that blind optimism toward technology, aided by the passivity of its victims, could only be self-destructive — witness the collapse of bourgeois civilization and the rise of fascism — if it did not retain a sense of value and allow for individual, ethically-grounded

14. See Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School* (Chichester: Horwood Press, 1984), p. 21; and Martin Jay, *Permanent Exiles: Essays on the Intellectual Migration from Germany to America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 44.

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intervention. This was not all that different from the premises of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* or those of *Commentary*, neither of which discounted scientific development outright. Allegedly, the problem was one of agency: who could reintroduce reflexivity into a society increasingly based on instrumental reason, and with what means.[15] This problem was never resolved. With its emphasis on empirical analysis and individuals rather than institutions, and its lack of theory, this approach was "conventionally positivist" and adaptative toward "the local bourgeois order."[16]

Commentary embraced the work of the Institute in exile, as well as that of conventional liberals. Similarly, Greenberg himself did not remain unwaveringly committed to the Left. By the mid-1940s his critique of dialectical materialism was fueled by the same concerns as those of *Commentary*, as can be seen in his first essay, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), which is critical of instrumental reason. Noting that the "birth of the avant-garde coincided . . . with the . . . development of scientific revolutionary thought in Europe," and that these Enlightenment breakthroughs begat both free-market capitalism and Marxism — the collisions between them generating the ideological struggle Greenberg saw the avant-garde to ideology and its graphic representation — preferring the "absolute" instead, i.e., utopia and abstract art.[17] In this context, the term *kitsch* does not refer only to "low art," which Greenberg saw as the inevitable product of capitalism, but also to the cultural weapons of totalitarianism. He argued that, as official culture in Germany, Italy and Russia, *kitsch* required "a fully matured cultural tradition, whose discoveries, acquisitions and perfected self-consciousness *kitsch* can take advantage of for its own ends."[18] Consequently, any academic style could be *kitsch*, and, since it "kept culture moving" and unable to be appropriated by *kitsch*, the avant-garde performed a vaguely ideological but not directly political function.

Here Greenberg was still clinging to a dialectical concept of history, in which the visual arts did not really have a role. If capitalism was now in

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15. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. xii-xiii; Elliot E. Cohen and Clement Greenberg, editorial preface, "The Crisis of the Individual," in *Commentary*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (November 1945), p. 1.

16. Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976), p. 33. See also Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), chapters 7 and 8, for an account of *Studies in Prejudice*.

17. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," reprinted in John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg . . . , op. cit.*, Vol. 1, pp. 7-8.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

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decline because of international economic depression, it was not the responsibility of art to represent a socialist culture but to preserve culture for the inevitable socialism which would follow the collapse of capitalism. This confidence dissipated in 1942, when he publicly eschewed both dialectical materialism and Trotskyism because they lacked a scientific methodology.[19] Consequently, for Greenberg and an increasing number of independent Left intellectuals, socialism was no longer scientifically mandated and Marxism was game for reinterpretation.[20]

Along with Adorno, in his reconsideration of dialectical materialism Greenberg also looked to modernism and, in his case, abstract art, as the means of preserving socialist ideals.[21] While he still maintained that modern art was free of ideology, in "Abstract Art" (1944), he saw it as developing as a cultural "counter-revolution" to the Enlightenment already in the 1870s, with the advent of empiricism, applied science and experimentalism. This revolution was the result of the realization that: ". . . the earth could no longer afford to Western man, or his economy, indefinite space in which to expand; that verified facts were the only certainties; that each of the activities of culture could be exercised with assurance only within its own province and only when that province had been strictly defined. The age of specialization and of limited intellectual and spiritual objectives sets in — after Hegel, for instance, philosophers stopped constructing world systems."[22] Of all possible modernisms, it was abstraction which best exemplified the counter-revolution's ongoing assessment of the limits of rationality and its practical applications. Freed from the object, it could exhaust the possibilities of its media on its own terms, on a limited, experimental basis. Greenberg called it *positivist* practice and saw it as informing "the best philosophical and political intelligence of the time."[23] It allegedly reached its fullest and most innovative form with the Cubists. Yet they had a failure of nerve, retreating to the represented object after having developed their abstract canvases in 1911-1912.[24]

19. Clement Greenberg, "An Inquiry on Dialectical Materialism," *op. cit.*, pp. 108-109.

20. Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: the Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

21. For an interesting discussion of Horkheimer's views on modernism as opposed to avant-gardism, see Martin Jay, "Mass Culture and Aesthetic Redemption: The Debate between Max Horkheimer and Siegfried Kracauer," in Seyla Benhabib et al., eds., *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives* (London: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 364-387.

22. Clement Greenberg, "Abstract Art," reprinted in John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg . . .*, Vol. 1, p. 201. It originally appeared in the *Nation*, April 15, 1944.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

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Consequently, modernism's failure to sustain a critique of the Enlightenment meant that a successor to the Cubists, and the Left critique they had abandoned, had yet to be found.

His quest ended in October 1947, with Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. In "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture" (commissioned by the British magazine *Horizon*), Greenberg identified Pollock as the epitome of the "modern man" because of Pollock's retention of a "positivist" worldview. Confronted with global irrationality, hysteria and denial, Pollock's art resonated a particular kind "rationality" directed by a "Nietzschean" subjectively grounded will. While its debt to the Cubist overall composition and grid linked Pollock's work to the counter-revolutionary tradition, his work was also marked by a distinct individualism. According to Greenberg: "We stand in need of a much greater infusion of consciousness than heretofore into what we call the creative. We need men of the world not too much amazed by experience, not too much at loss in the face of current events, not at all overpowered by their own feelings . . . ."[25] Similar arguments were developed the following year in "The Decline of Cubism," where he linked gesture painting more closely to the end of dialectical politics. Noting that the quality of the merely decorative, ideology-free School of Paris painters (such as Matisse) were unaffected by the Occupation, Cubist art (a manifestation of dialectical thought) was rapidly degenerating: "At first glance we realize that we are faced with the debacle of the age of 'experiment,' of the . . . Cubist mission and its hope, coincident with that of Marxism and the whole matured tradition of the Enlightenment, of humanizing the world. In the plastic arts, Cubism, and nothing else, is the age of 'experiment' . . . and the main factor in the recent decline of art in Europe is the disorientation of Cubist style . . ."[26] Cubism embodied the "optimism, boldness, and self-confidence of the highest stage of industrial capitalism," which should have been the prelude to the communist utopia. Yet two world wars and the emergence of totalitarianism had destroyed this confidence that, through scientific advancement, "the world would inevitably go on improving . . . [that] there was no risk of getting anything inferior or more dangerous than what one already had."[27] Again, Greenberg turned to Pol-

25. Greenberg, "The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture," in *Horizon*, Vol. 16, no. 93-94, October, 1947, p. 28.

26. Greenberg, "The Decline of Cubism," in O'Brian ed., *Clement Greenberg. . .*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 212.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 213 - 214.

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lock (as well as Arshile Gorky) as the rational yet gestural and emotive individual who could introduce into Marxism and the rational, Cubist grid a much needed "humanist" component.

This idea of the creative individual as a rationally-guided historical agent would grow increasingly important in Greenberg's subsequent writings. This was because it was strongly influenced by Schlesinger, whose lexicon of the "new radical" was outlined in the March 1947 issue of *Partisan Review* and subsequently developed in *The Vital Center* (1948), which became the liberal manifesto of its time.[28] A Harvard political historian too young to have been a Marxist in the 1930s, Schlesinger came out of the American pragmatic tradition of Dewey and James.[29] Yet, for their 1947 symposium on "The Future of Socialism," the editors of *Partisan Review* invited him, along with former fellow traveller Sidney Hook, the former *New Masses* editor Granville Hicks, George Orwell, and Victor Serge — a Left Oppositionist who up to 1939 was a confidante of Trotsky — to inquire into ways to redefine socialism so that it would remain valuable in the age of totalitarianism.[30] If Orwell's description of the socialist in the post-war period as a doctor "treating an all but hopeless case" captured the mood of the symposium, Schlesinger's own brand of "democratic socialism" stood out because of its liberalism: the advocacy of piecemeal reform of existing democratic institutions and their privileging of intellectuals as having a special role in maintaining critical awareness, if not radical sensibility. This distinctly post-war liberalism was different from "the official liberalism of the Enlightenment" because of its critical awareness. If classic or pre-war liberalism was grounded in "science, bourgeois complacency, and a belief in progress . . . , tolerance, free inquiry, and technology, operating in the framework of human perfectibility," his socialist democracy was tempered by the awareness of history's betrayal of progressive theory: ". . . the rationalists were betrayed by their own god in the twentieth century when history went back on them and unleashed the terror. Freud, Kierkegaard, Sorel, Nietzsche had charted patterns of depravity while the sun of optimism was high in the sky. As it sank, practical men, like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, transformed depravity into a way of life."[31] According to

28. See, e.g., Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 3; Lasch, *op. cit.*, p. 308; Wald, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

29. Lasch, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

30. Editorial note, "The Future of Socialism I," in *Partisan Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (January-February 1947), p. 25.

31. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Future of Socialism III: The Perspective Now," in *Partisan Review*, Vol. XIV, no.3 (May-June 1947), pp. 235, 242.

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Schlesinger, the same insightful individuals who had seen the fallacy of progressivism were also the ones who, "within the frame of gradualism" could somehow guide liberal society toward democratic socialism.[32]

The role of Counter-Enlightenment intellectuals is crucial here, for they embody the efficacy of radical agency. While still cursory in "The Future of Socialism," this notion was more fully articulated by Schlesinger two years later in *The Vital Center* — an exceptionally durable text, first published in 1949 and reprinted in 1950, 1962, 1970 and 1988. Again praising Nietzsche and other members of the "Counter-Enlightenment" for having exposed the end of the notion of progress, such insightful individuals now played a cultural rather than a political role. By generating a number of independent and often conflicting views, artists and intellectuals could create "a genuine cultural pluralism" able to provide "a rich emotional life, reflecting the actual relations between the individual and the community." This would turn social discontent into a "source of creativity."[33] At the time active dissent was not an option and acceptance of the liberal democratic state was essential if Western-style democracy was to resist the totalitarian threat: "The democratic left today has committed itself to the limited state — European socialists, retreating precipitately from the abyss of totalitarianism, as well as American New Dealers, advancing cautiously out of the jungle of private enterprise . . . Somewhere between the abyss and the jungle the new radicalism will work out a sensible economic policy. There will certainly be changes in the structure of the economy. But these changes will be brought about in a way which will not disrupt the fabric of custom, law and mutual confidence upon which personal rights depend, nor will they liquidate the basis of future resistance. The transition must be piecemeal. It must be parliamentary. It must respect civil liberties and due process of law. Only in this way can it preserve free society."[34]

Such a definition of the Left as critical in nature, cultural in practice and centrist in politics marked its transformation into contemporary liberalism. It was also decisive in the evolution of Greenberg's modernist paradigm in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This paradigm was characterized by its strictly cultural character and by an increasing concern with materials and form, to the exclusion of readability and external, let alone political reference. These concerns, developed in his "Modernist Painting" (1960-65),

32. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
33. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Politics of Freedom* (London: Heinemann, 1950), p. 234.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 141.

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were not an issue for Greenberg in the late 1940s, when he was still assessing the legacy of dialectical thought. Yet, by the early 1950s, he was an ardent supporter of contemporary liberal democracy, even falling out with Schlesinger concerning the latter's support for the "left wing" of the ACCF, over opposition to McCarthyism.[35] By 1955, he was already worried about gestural abstraction becoming academic and *kitsch* in the hands of second generation practitioners, with all of its political implications. That year he attempted to place his treatise "American-Type Painting," with *Perspectives* (1953-56) — a magazine financed by the Ford Foundation, directed by members of the former independent Left, and intended as a cultural palliative for anti-American sentiments in Europe and Asia — where he indicated weariness with gestural abstraction because it was still operating within a Cubist space.[36] If, in 1949, the Cubist legacy for Abstract Expressionism was also seen as part of the Marxist legacy, these links were now a liability. Temporarily replacing Pollock's emotive gesture with the post-Cubist color field painting of Barnett Newman in order to "test society's capacity for high art" — and to protect high art from becoming *kitsch* — Greenberg was again looking for something else in the ideological struggle against massification.[37]

The replacement of gestural abstraction with color field painting was crucial to the development of Greenberg's liberal aesthetic. Exhibiting his European pedigree — he could trace color field technique back to Monet and the late Turner — his subsequent essays elaborated the suitability of color field painting as modernism's latest resistance against "a society bent in principle on rationalizing everything,"[38] yet operating wth a set of aesthetic principles which would bring contemporary modernism back in step with the "infra-logic" spanning the history of modernist art. If Western art since the 16th century was characterized by alternations between the painterly and the non-painterly,[39] as he claimed in "After Abstract Expressionism" (1962), and gesture painting had degenerated into mannerism or

35. See Wald, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-279.

36. Clement Greenberg, "American-Type Painting," in John O'Brian, ed., *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Vol. 3, Affirmations and Refusals 1950-1956* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 234. Clement Greenberg, "Letter from James Laughlin," December 6, 1954, Clement Greenberg Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, microfilm no. N/70-7.

37. Greenberg, "American-Type Painting," *op. cit.*, p. 235.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

39. Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism,"1962, ed. John O'Brian, *Clement Greenberg . . ., op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 121.

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"homeless representation" — the application of painterly technique to representational ends (the stylistic netherworld of neither abstraction nor representation typical of Jasper Johns, Diebenkorn and de Kooning[40]) — color field painting not only provided a way out of these essentially late Cubist practices but inherited the Counter-Enlightenment's primary task. If the aim of "the self-criticism (of modernist art)" was "to determine the irreducible working essence of art and the separate arts,"[41] it denoted both flatness and limitations explored on an *individual basis*. The strength of color field painting was its resistance to imitation: "Inspiration alone belongs altogether to the individual; everything else, including skill, can now be acquired by any one. Inspiration remains the only factor in the creation of a successful work of art that cannot be copied or imitated." While acknowledging that this was not limited to color field painting — in fact, both Newman and Mondrian possessed it — works such as Newman's were distinguished by the sophistication of their concept, which frustrated imitators.[42] As he reiterated two years later, gesture painting could make no such claim: its Cubist innovations, "the great and original achievement of the first generation," had "degenerated into a blatant formula . . . in the hands of those who came later."[43]

Consequently, Greenberg's modernist paradigm must be understood in the context of the phenomenon of *kitsch* and its threat to individuality. "Modernist Painting"[44] can be seen as an effort to resolve this "crisis" of Abstract Expressionism by expanding the relation between style and anti-totalitarian aesthetics beyond emotive form, by recourse to the piecemeal, experimental approach he previously identified with gesture painting. This paralleled Schlesinger's liberal response to the crisis of the Left. Greenberg now described modernist innovation as *spontaneous and non-programmatic*, as the *critique* of Enlightenment practices through the Enlightenment's own means: a rational investigation concerning the nature of the paintings' own medium. By tinkering with empirical factors such as size, texture, and scale, art now "belong(ed) to the same specific

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
43. Greenberg, "The 'Crisis' of Abstract Art" (1964), in *Collected Essays . . .*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 180.
44. This essay did not appear in *Art and Literature* in 1965, as Clark claims, but was originally delivered in 1960 as a lecture for the Voice of America. See T. J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London: Harper and Row, 1985), p. 47.

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cultural tendency as modern science," not in a programmatic but in a piecemeal fashion dictated by the individual artist: "The self-criticism of Modernism grows out of, but is not the same thing as, the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its accepted sense does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized."[45] Individualist and differentiated, concerned only with its own medium, contemporary abstract painting avoided the levelling project of the Enlightenment. Ensconced in the realm of culture, however, it could not bring about any political change. This autonomy or disinterestedness enabled it to coexist in whatever political ethos would tolerate it. So, if at the time of "Avant-garde and Kitsch" it was supposed to preserve the values of high art for socialism, by the early 1960s, it embodied the methodology of liberal democracy: ". . . Modernist art does *not* offer theoretical demonstrations . . . it happens to convert theoretical possibilities into empirical ones, in doing which it tests many theories about art for their relevance to the actual practice and actual experience of art. In this respect alone can Modernism be considered subversive."[46]

It has been argued that, unlike Adorno's, Greenberg's modernism lacked the "categorical distinctions" of abstraction, dissonance and the new. These distinctions allegedly provide Adorno's modernism with a relevance to postmodern art which Greenberg's lacks. Abstraction can express dissonance: an alienation from the "reification of the mimetic" and a critical reaction which "is the basic principle of modernism."[47] This, in turn, is a function of commodification, which turns oppositional art into an image of false "harmony."[48] If the new is necessary to modernism in order to keep it out of the reach of these stultifying forces, it is this perpetual process of "re-newal" which postmodern practices have inherited from Adorno's modernism. Yet this is remarkably similar to Greenberg's understanding of the relation between the avant-garde and *kitsch*.

Jay Bernstein has argued persuasively against seeing Adorno's aesthetics as part of the Enlightenment, but rather as "against autonomy, differentiation, modernity."[49] Art is an alternative form of *praxis* and "art products are images of things as they could be for an objective reason, an historical

45. Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Collected Essays . . .*, *op.* cit. Vol. 4, pp. 90-91 and 85.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
47. Peter Osborne, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
49. Jay Bernstein, "The Death of Sensuous Particulars," *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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reason." This is evident in its concern with visuality, the particular and the non-identical — qualities which he finds in American gesture and color field painting.[50] The evolution of Greenberg's thought away from these values of the "Counter-Enlightenment," dialectical thought and Abstract Expressionism retained these same characteristics in his liberal modernist paradigm through his emphasis on individual inspiration. The difference between Greenberg in the late 1950s and in the early to mid-1960s was not the discarding of these values but locating them in art practices with no radical associations, making it easier to ensconce them within the discipline of art.

If Greenberg's modernist paradigm was unconcerned with what lay beyond it, this was largely due to its pluralism. He seemed content that a diversity of art practices would ensure fresh innovation. As a differentiated practice, that was all it was required to do, as liberal politics could, and would, take care of itself. In a way he was right, at least regarding pluralism. If the 1960s saw a shift from concern with materials to a "postmodern" concern with the subject-matter of art — a return to historical awareness under the rubrics of openness, contingency and even utopianism — the differentiation of art practices, now among a diversity of interest groups and ensconced within the realm of culture, has remained intact. Consequently, postmodernism's differentiated practices, like modernism's earlier utopian project, fits neatly into a liberal context because they share the same political goals, i.e., the disavowal of an ideology of total social reorganization in favor of piecemeal *criticism* from a plurality of interest groups.[51]

As already indicated, Adorno cannot be seen as a liberal ideologist. Yet whatever legacy his modernism has for a politically engaged postmodernism should be seen as acquiescent to liberalism as Greenberg's was openly supportive. As Agnes Heller has shown, although Adorno sought to distance himself from the American empirical approach to sociology,[52] his own political views were not structurally different from those of his opponent Karl Popper.[53] If Popper privileged the scientist above the rest of society in determining social values, Adorno similarly

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

51. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

52. Agnes Heller, "The Positivist Dispute as a Turning Point in German Post-War Theory," in *New German Critique* 15 (Fall 1978), p. 51.

53. See Alan Ryan, "Popper and Liberalism," in Gregory Currie and Alan Musgrave, ed., *Popper and the Human Sciences* (Lancaster: Nijhoff International Philosophy Series, 1985), pp. 89-104.

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privileged the "philosopher-sociologist" or the intelligentsia.[54] Schlesinger post-war liberalism also advocated leaving politics to professionals and argued against comprehensive social reordering in favor of piecemeal, critical and creative activity on various individual levels. Similarly, Schlesinger embraced Popper's *The Open Society* in his search for a democratic "third way" between capitalism and totalitarianism, and inquired into the extent to which liberal theory could synthetize both Left and Right during those decades when the Old Left disintegrated and radical activity shifted to a plurality of critical cultural practices — the aestheticization of radical politics.[55]

54. Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

55. Arthur J. Schlesinger Jr., "The Politics of Democracy," in *Partisan Review*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (March-April 1951), p. 246; and *The Politics of Freedom*, *op. cit.* p. 231.

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*Logos without Ethos: On Interculturalism and Multiculturalism**

Claude Karnoouh

Interculturalism and multiculturalism have been the subject of university courses, seminars and international colloquia for two decades, producing a large literature which has become the basis for a general political debate about democracy in the US and Western Europe. These concepts are now central even in discussions about an Eastern Europe recently liberated from the communist yoke — especially in regions with large national minorities. Just mentioning them seems sufficient to resolve the age old problems of the struggles between majority and minority in those regions. Is it legitimate to borrow such concepts? Can the same terms be used to describe the new migrations of people from the impoverished South or East to the rich West and those historical movements which resulted in the Europe of nations? The first are the results of the effects of advanced capitalism; the second of the old and almost obsolete history of an earlier capitalism still able to generate wars such as the one in the former Yugoslavia. Along with others such as "human rights" and "democracy," these terms are now thrown about to form new slogans replacing older, obsolete ones like "class struggle," "international proletariat," "imperialism," "free world," "historical compromise," etc.

Is there anything new about interculturalism between two cultures? The Latin prefix *inter* denotes separation, spacing and reciprocity. Interculturalism is linked to anything that binds together or separates two or more cultures, but without any reference to their presence in the same space. It has been around for centuries. By its very generality, it includes not only

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the classical world, but also rural and urban cultures. Even a superficial glance at the history of European literate culture shows to what extent interculturalism has been part of the history of classical Europe ever since the Roman elite appropriated Greek culture.[1] In fact, interculturalism is simply a feature of Europe in general — something created by migrations, wars and various exchanges that brought into contact customs, traditions, institutions, art and religions of various ethnic and national groups.

Since the end of antiquity, the cultural history of Europe may be seen as a vast syncretization of its populations. This is why, even today, there are still cultural differences, traces of this age-old interculturality in modern nations. There are contrasts in the French,[2] Italian, or Spanish landscape; in the Christian sects within individual nations (is one less German, French or Hungarian if one is Catholic or Protestant? Is one less Rumanian if one is Russian Orthodox or Greek Orthodox?);[3] as well as centuries-old controversies about the implications of political thought or the multiple imbrications of the material, ritual and cultural practices of peasant culture. A clear eye and a sharp ear immediately catches the various differences, proximities and borrowings. That was also the case in Hungary, Transylvania and the Ukraine, first under the influence of the German and Hungarian reform, then as a result of the Catholic and Austrian Counter-Reformation.

By invoking the irreducible specificity of ethnic-nations (of the "national soul," to use a formula typical of nationalist philosophies), the 19th century birth of nation-states presented by nationalist historiographies as the blossoming of radical differences among people, might lead one to believe in the disappearance of both the classical and the popular interculturalism of previous centuries. But that is merely nationalist propaganda. The axioms behind this new political form derived from a single metaphysical source independent of the particular national group that benefited from them. The young nation-states that emerged from the ruins of empires were the product of this general modernity. Ruled by an archaic political system, the empires were an obstacle to the integrative dynamism of modernization. Seemingly paradoxical at first glance, the division of Europe into various nation-states brought about cultural and political uniformity as if, unable to transform the old empires, it was necessary to

1. See Remi Brague, *Europe, la voie romaine* (Paris: Criterion, 1992).
2. See Marc Bloch, *Les caractères originaux des campagnes françaises* (Paris: Amrand Colin, 1953).
3. Victor Louis Tapié, *Civilisations et peuples du Danube* (Paris: Fayard, 1962).

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shatter these vast sovereign spaces where an archaic medievalism still held sway, resisting the socio-political innovations imposed by the techno-industrial mode of production. The new nation-state was merely the new political form needed to govern people organized by the new social relations engendered by the spread of techno-industrial production. The fact that this historical development did not take place at the same time and in the same way everywhere is a result of the previous differences typical of the whole history of Europe: first, the separation of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires; then, a few centuries later, the emergence of modern capitalism in Holland and England.

Yet it would be wrong to see the multiplication of nation-states as a regression. On the contrary, it tended to intensify interculturality and competition around common identities. This is why the resulting conflicts were fed by all of the shiny new arguments of modernity: those of the social sciences, history, linguistics, the philosophy of culture, ethnology or folklore, etc., thereby justifying unprecedented disasters with weapons of rational discourse. Henceforth, the enemy was no longer the barbarian or the foreigner, to be contained at the borders of the empire or integrated (provided he recognized the emperor's political and religious supremacy) but, rather, someone whom the scientific *logos* had placed outside a general and abstract humanity.[4] National independence presupposes the principles of uniformity — a uniformity imposing an industrial and financial economy, technological and cultural innovations, the same commodities with the unique value of an implacable future, i.e., progress. This is also why the political independence of under-developed countries always seems like the simulacrum of a spectacle offered to masses increasingly separated from their own traditions, even if these traditions are themselves the result of a distant syncretism. Thus, to take a familiar example, even during the nationalist strife that ripped apart Central and Eastern Europe between the two World Wars, the rapid penetration of life-style, clothes, tastes and neo-Protestant religious beliefs from Western Europe and the US did accelerate uniformity. This indicates that even the strongest traditions are not strong enough to resist modernity. From the viewpoint of Western

4. See Claude Karnoouh, "The End of National Culture in Eastern Europe," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991), pp. 132-140; and "Le musée national d'art piège du nationalisme," in *Revue des Études slaves,* LXIV, no. 4 (1992), pp. 697-704, "Le nationalisme comme métaphysique du sujet dans le miroir de l'autre," in *La Nouvelle alternative* 36 (December 1994). For a description of the results of this homogenization of national difference, see John Reed, *The War in Eastern Europe* (New York: Scribner's, 1916).

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civilization, this is nothing new: the conquest of America is its signature moment, ending with the elimination of dozens of Indian cultures.

WWII accelerated the trend toward uniformity. Despite obvious political differences, the division of the world into two geopolitical blocs did not prevent further uniformity, even under the guise of communism. Something about this history resembles cloning. Were the communist regimes not the advocates of massive and violent industrialization, rapid urbanization, accelerated uprooting, integration of economic interests through concessions, loans and debts, technology transfers from the West to the USSR, but also from the USSR to the new Third World nations? The economic and military competition between the two blocs engulfed the entire globe in the same maelstrom: wars of national liberation, anti-communist guerillas, decolonization, Soviet penetration, the emergence of small Southeast Asian dragons, etc. It is amazing how, in fifty years, the trend toward uniformity throughout the world has intensified.

This dynamic is endless, as long as it obtains within societies that refuse to accept the domination of financial calculation. Following the implosion of the communist regimes (or the conversion of China to economic capitalism controlled by the communist power structure),[5] there is now only one empire, the US, prodigal and original son of Western modernity,[6] which, unfettered by any historical tradition rooted in a particular territory, has organized production with unparalleled efficiency. A colonized country, a promised land of gigantic dimensions, it offers ex-European immigrants a place where they can work through all the objectifying details of technical innovation and production. To do this, it has eliminated the only traditions presenting any obstacles: those of the Indians. The very essence of capitalism is infinite expansion; not even outer space escapes the transformation of everything into commodities and therefore into exchange value.[7] The "Global Village" must be understood not as a vulgar slogan but as the expression of a planetary web of communication known

5. Has the Chinese regime, still calling itself Communist, gone through a radical socio-economic mutation, becoming a dictatorship of the party elite in order to begin radical capitalist development while holding on to political power and part of the profits? Examples from Latin America and Southeast Asia suggest that a powerful capitalism can adapt to dictatorship. This is consistent with the economic theories of the Chicago School which has always regarded economic freedom as something different from political freedom.

6. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (Paris: Payot, 1980).

7. See Robert Zubrin, "My Plan for Colonizing Mars," in *Technology Review*, tr. in *Le Courrier International* 348, (July 5-9, 1997), in which the director of the National Space Society writes, "How can one guarantee a free, egalitarian and democratic society if there is not sufficient space for it to develop?"

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as the Internet, already paving the way for the creation of new commodities. Whether on-line or not, everyone is dominated by a totality where the very notion of interculturality dissolves into a series of micro-variations of the exact same economic condition. There, the only cultural differences are between those who prefer Coke to Pepsi or MacDonalds to Kentucky Fried Chicken.[8]

Can one speak today of an interculturality describing both the union and separation of distinctive cultures? Has this concept become one of the many simulacra of posthumanism during late modernity? While globalization is becoming reality for a minority and virtual reality for the majority, what resists globalization cannot really be exchanged if it does not transform itself — one way or another — into a commodity. When the West tunes in or absorbs cultural events from other cultures, it simply transforms their values into those that will allow them to be integrated into the world of commodities. In other words, everything that seems different, but can be integrated into the sphere of commodities, loses the ritual or cultural values that previously constituted its particularity. These are the limits of historical interculturality, when *inter* means only that there are no irreducible differences and helps conceal the reduction to a univocal meaning related to production. That is the meaning of the prefix *inter* in Internet.

To talk about interculturality as relations among people entering late modernity, when their future is becoming increasingly identical, is like trying to revive a dying man. As soon as it becomes an object of political discourse, unfettered by socio-economic reality, interculturality is reduced to a fable for the happy masses to make them believe in the equality of international relations. At a time when the gap between the poor and the rich has never been wider, interculturality looks like one of those simulacra of democracy marking the end of the political in late modernity.

The notion of interculturality modulating relations among people living in different countries must be complemented by the notion of multiculturalism dealing with new modes of socialization at the heart of the most advanced countries. The paradigmatic couple, globalization/multiculturalism, presents a number of paradoxes. Allegedly, the "Global Village" is unavoidable, while national societies are breaking up into various socio-cultural groups co-existing harmoniously. This state of affairs must also be seen as the end of white, European monoculturalism. These claims

8. See Philippe Forget, *L'homme machinal* (Paris: Syros, 1991); and Gilles Polycarpe, *Le Réseau et l'infini: Essai d'anthropologique philosophique et stratégique* (Paris: Économica, 1996).

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come from countries where mass immigration founded the modern nation. After the first European conquests, after the physical elimination or socio-economic marginalization of the original inhabitants (American Indians, Australian aborigines or New Zealand Maoris), the national society was formed by the massive arrival of populations first from Western Europe (the first colonists) and Africa (slaves), then from various countries in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and then Asia and the Middle East. This concerns primarily the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. After the decolonization of the French, British, Dutch and Portuguese empires, the development of economic neo-colonialism and the demand for immigrant labor to rebuild Western Europe following WWII, the phenomenon gradually expanded to all of Western Europe. Thus there are two equally important but non-contradictory tendencies at play: globalization and multicultural fragmentation.

Globalization — another name for uniformity — points to an ever-greater standardization of products, communication networks, information, commodity and currency circulation and, for this very reason, social relations. What are the processes defining cultural differences at a place undergoing globalization? What does multiculturalism have to do with this globalization-standardization? In the last century the world was characterized by seemingly insurmountable cultural differences in a context where various cultures did not know one another. Under the pressures of standardizing modernity, however, these differences disappeared, either absorbed, syncretized or simply destroyed when their originality became too much of an obstacle to modernization.

From the beginning, globalization was a techno-economic process that organized identical social, political and cultural formations. Thus progress and globalization are synonymous, even in the way they announce themselves by disengaging from their techno-economic source, disguising it as a destiny ruled by natural laws; in short, by naturalizing the techno-economic rationalization, its financial origins and its profit strategies. On the social side, multiculturalism's axiological neutrality bans all political considerations concerning conflicts of interests resulting from this generalized rationalization of production. With both globalization and multiculturalism, the notion of conflicting social classes disappears. Precisely because of the economic neutrality of its paradigms, the dichotomy globalization/multiculturalism can simultaneously juggle the social and the political. This neutralization is reminiscent of Lukács' political analyses of the 19th century theory of art for art's sake. While its

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theoreticians — essentially German idealists — argued for the autonomy of art in relation to the constraints of day to day life, they forgot that if art had freed itself from the Church, the monarchy and the prince, this freedom was only made possible by the creation of an art market that displaced its alienation to another sphere. Through its autonomy, art had become the expression of a social fragmentation brought about by the bourgeoisie's rationalization of production.[9]

Sociologists define modern societies as complex ensembles with multiple functional divisions and contradictory rules everyone must accept. This generates antinomic individuals and collective strategies, resulting in dysfunctions that no ritual can codify or resolve. Everyone is left to his private anguish, the sanitized interpretations of psychology or, worse, the massive use of neuroleptics, alcohol or drugs.[10] The fragmentation of experience comes from the disjunction between the imperatives of capitalist production — techno-financial constraints imposed on the labor force and the demands for profits determining capital's strategies and tactics — and all other non-utilitarian cultural necessities of life. The only way to reintegrate these cultural necessities into a rational totality is to transform them into commodities, even if they thereby become what Baudrillard has described as the simulacra.[11] Thus the logic of the mass production of identical objects, the rationalization of technical procedures leading to the interconnection of telephones, televisions and other information transfer, is developing into an unprecedented globalization of the economic sphere, typified by the delocalization of transnational business and by the simultaneity of financial transactions. Obviously, this process has only accelerated during the 20th century. Wars, revolutions, decolonizations, the opening of markets and mass tourism are merely new forms of the same Western *eidos* that undertook to conquer the world, unleashing a generalized Westernization that transforms all people into actors of this *eidos*.[12]

Whatever the prophets of unlimited economic liberalism may say,

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9. Georg Lukács, *Studies in European Realism* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964).

10. Doctors describe the end of the 1990s as the Prozac years. See Claude Karnoouh, "Is the Problem Drugs or Society? Amoral Reflections on the Postmodern," in *Telos* 108 (Summer 1996), pp. 105-116.

11. Jean Baudrillard, *La transparence du mal* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).

12. See Remo Guidieri, *L'abondance des pauvres* (Paris: Seuil, 1984): and Claude Karnoouh, "L'Europe existe-t-telle encore?" in *Revue d'Études slaves*, Vol. LXVI, No. 1 (Paris: 1994); See also my *Adieu à la différence: essais sur la modernité tardive* (Paris: Arcantère, 1993).

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globalization provides a better characterization of capitalism than Marx' definition of it as "the world as accumulation of commodities." Today one must add "the world as accumulation of univocal information." How can one talk about multiculturalism when hundreds of radio and television programs broadcast the same images, the same dialogues in different languages but reduced to the same clichés, the same spectacles, the same sports, the same clips watched by hundreds of millions of spectators? Such a globalization, new in history, stays its inexorable course. That is why all movements, revolts or wars of the reactive nationalistic type only end up as civil wars where the goal is a more egalitarian division of wealth. It is nothing less than the arrival of the technical essence that, as Heidegger wrote, is not technical at all, but rather metaphysical. In the final analysis, globalization is only the uncovering of the objectifying infinity of productivist potentialities.[13]

As such, the fall of communism — which also presented itself as a reactive form of modernist rationality, even if always subverted by a political *telos* that believed (for a time at least) in salvation in a classless society[14] — simultaneously embodies the extension and acceleration of globalization. Nothing here can be seen as dialectical transcendence; it is, rather, a leveling or, better, a progressive conforming to the Western *eidos* because its populist-bureaucratic being, true socialism, no longer fits in with the new needs to mobilize and control the masses, both in the West and the East.[15] To admit that the Western *eidos* gave rise to true communism is to see the truth behind the event. It is the elaboration of a syncretism between the techno-science cult, the end of necessity and history, and redemption by a new collective redeemer, the proletariat,[16] in a place called Russia where modernity, because of unique cultural and political conditions, was penetrating only with great difficulty.[17] What imploded in 1989, therefore, is the hypostasy of the West which, further East, in China, mutated merely into a military dictatorship in order to fulfill, without too many social risks, the same economic destiny.

13. See Gérard Granel, "Les années trente sont devant nous," in *Les Temps modernes* (February 1993).

14. See Nicolas Berdiaev, *Source et sens du communisme russe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1937); and Moshe Lewin, *La formation du système soviétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

15. See Jean-Christophe Rufin, *La dictature libérale: le secret de la toute puissance des démocraties au 20e siècle* (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattés, 1994); and Geminello Alvi, *Dell'Estremo occidente* (Milan: Nardi, 1993).

16. This is just a brief summary of Berdiaev's thesis, *op. cit.*

17. Claude Karnoouh, "Le réalisme socialiste ou le triomphe de la bourgeoisie," in *La Part de l'oeil* (Brussels: 1996).

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How can one make sense of multiculturalism within such a context? If one were to look for a real multiculturalism (a territorial contraposition of cultures, languages and religions) at the heart of an empire both technically modern and politically archaic, it would be difficult to find a better instance than in the former USSR. Once the party's totalizing control fell apart, regional or local nationalisms sprang forth as if seventy years of centralizing and repressive power had only been a parenthesis with no real impact on collective identities. In some cases, the modernity brought about by communism took some peoples from an archaic ethno-religious to a premodern national identity. From the Baltic states to Armenia, from the Ukraine to the Caucasian and Central Asian republics, the empire exploded into different states modeled on the federal divisions created by the communist regime. Each established autonomous governance and state institutions, and each now confronts the problems of ethnic, national and/or religious minorities, while begging for the IMF's assistance. This is only further proof that political independence in modernity is only a facade when not backed up by economic power. The same goes for the former Yugoslavia. A multicultural and multi-religious country, it disintegrated as soon as communist power lost its ability to unite and politically control the various republics while guaranteeing economic well-being.

Is multiculturalism related to the protection of archaic cultures? This does not seem to be what bother its proponents. Because of the conquest by the Western *eidos*, today archaism is a moot point, even if one still finds remnants of it. What Lévi-Strauss once called "the rainbow of human cultures" was actually the juxtaposition of a variety of cultures, unknown to one another, which could borrow various elements they then integrated into their own systems. The time when the West could have been surprised by primitive cultures, when the "savage" raised religious questions (does the "savage" have a soul?) or passionate attraction[18] has finally come to an end. What remains today is confused either with the 19th century European *lumpen* or with consumer products for cheerful tourists. In the first case, the "savage" is marginalized and domesticated; in the second, he is reduced to a commodity: a pet required to satisfy desires for cheap exoticism.

The multiculturalism of the American left deals with an entirely different set of phenomena. In the beginning, it was fueled by antiracist

18. Compare the novels written at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, such as *Paul et Virginie* and *Atala*, with a certain anthropology in the 20th century, which became a kind of rite of passage for young Western intellectuals.

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struggles, a recognition of the social and cultural dignity of all immigrants in the ghettos.[19] It dealt with questions of urbanization in American megalopolises where, beside Afro-Americans, diverse, teaming populations had come to look for work and wealth at the heart of the capitalist world, while escaping discrimination based on "race" or religion in their native countries. It grew along with the impoverishment created by the radicalization of liberal capitalism resulting in modern ghettoization. Seeking minimal protection, uprooted people came together on the basis of their country of origin and their religious or regional sub-cultures — even if they were a minority in their home country.[20] This mosaic no longer has anything in common with the ethnic and social makeup of the old cosmopolitan cities of the empires: the Salonika of the Ottoman Empire, the Vienna of the Hapsburgs, the Saint Petersburg of the Czars. There, each "nation" lived in a neighborhood with both the rich and the poor, elites and artisans, intellectuals and workers, and where solidarity was based on real communitarianism offset by submission to powerful social control. Following increased emigration from the South and East toward the North and the multiplication of community groups, multiculturalism both as a descriptive and practical instrument tried to mold a democracy of customs and opinions by recognizing a cultural relativism but never suspending the ethical judgment that submits this relativism to the ideal values promoted by American democracy.

This is a transformation of multiculturalism. A new urban world was created by these great mutations brought forth by decolonization and neocolonialism, numerous wars and genocides that, since the beginning of the century, have wreaked havoc in all East European societies. Long-term

19. See Anne Phillips, "Why Worry about Multiculturalism?" in *Dissent* (New York: Hiver, 1997), pp. 57-63.

20. For a history of multiculturalism in the US, see Denis Lacorne, *La crise de l'identité américaine* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), which traces it back to the conflict between assimilationists and non-assimilationists. The latter never posed the question of cultural difference in its radical form (except briefly at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries in the case of Asians). It was essentially an intra-European debate among members of the different religions. They were conflicts between Irish and Italian Catholics, between Northern and Southern Europeans, Balkan Europe and Eastern Europe, etc. The anti-assimilationists deemed "Latins" incapable of integrating the ethico-political values of the "good American," defined either according to the concept of tolerance as a universal principle handed down by the founding fathers (see p. 82) or according to the social Darwinism that held sway at the end of the last century. What remains is that, because of exceptional economic growth, the so-called unassimilables were always assimilated, thereby accepting the foundations of American political democracy, but more often than not refusing economic democracy to new immigrants.

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social and economic equilibria have been destroyed, resulting in ever larger numbers of people leaving for the West, fleeing the massacres of ferocious dictatorships and, last but not least, trying to escape the inexorable pauperization created by a system of production increasingly dependent on the international division of labor. In short, the current triumph of multiculturalism in the US indicates a failure of the melting pot, which has been one of the founding arguments of social democracy in that country since the beginning of the century. This failure has extended to the entire Western world — including countries such as France, whose strongly integrative Jacobinism is falling apart — as capitalism has gradually removed all national restrictions preventing the rationalization of the international division of labor and the quest for places where, thanks to cheap labor and lack of labor laws, it can realize maximum profits.[21]

If, initially, multiculturalism meant the presence of exiles, of the victims of the liberal economy, today it designates a much broader social reality. It now includes groups which, after successful economic integration, continue to flaunt their cultural difference. Now multiculturalism refers to a sort of equalization of all differences, whatever their source. Thus, in the US and Canada, there has been a homogenization of the values of the remains of Indian tribes surviving on reservations, Afro-American *lumpen*,[22] Haitians or Chicanos in ghettos and the ethnic groups firmly integrated within the general economic and political system. More-

21. Rumania is one of these places. Brilliant young computer engineers working for Western European companies are designing and producing software for a salary of 400 DM a month. In Germany, for similar work, a young engineer with comparable qualifications demands a monthly salary of 4000 DM. See A. M. Rosenthal, "Trade is Clinton's Foreign Priority. Democracy and Rights be Damned," in the *International Herald Tribune* (Thursday, November 28, 1996); and Sarah Anderson and John Kavanah, "Multinationals, Towards Economic Apartheid," in the *Baltimore Sun*, tr. in *Le Courrier international* 31 (December 5-11, 1996).

22. On this subject see a series of articles from the American press. Frank Rich, "A Stream of Beautiful Words," in *The New York Times*. Elizabeth Cummings, "Repainting the Burning House," in the *Afro-American Newspaper*. The author says, "What the President and many Americans can't seem to understand is that we can't begin an interracial dialogue without addressing the serious economic, social and ecological problems that feed the lack of understanding between blacks and whites. Until we are ready to deal with the deeper issues of unemployment, poverty and hunger, as well as the disparities in housing, health and education, it is premature to talk about a reconciliation between communities." Finally, according to Jack E. White's article in *Time*, "And the Forty Acres? And the Mule?" there is no use apologizing to the descendants of slaves if we don't deal with the current situation by creating a special fund to eradicate poverty among Blacks, obviously opposed by President Clinton and the white elites in the Democratic Party, despite their beautiful words and unwavering support of multiculturalism.

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over, the same concept includes groups defined by socio-biological differences (e.g., women)[23] or other groups trying to mainstream certain behaviors that had hitherto remained private (e.g., homosexuality). One might suppose that there are as many cultures of equal "cultural" value as there are real community groups, whatever their distinctive traits. Whether the difference is ethnic, linguistic, religious, or behavioral, they all turn into some ideal attached to irreducible traditions incompatible with all others. Such an idealist construction cannot withstand critical scrutiny. For the poor who have come for economic reasons, searching for the "American way of life," the American Left's multiculturalism has become, in a strange reversal (the abandonment of the left's traditional social terrain in favor of the cult of economic hyperliberalism) the politically correct credo of social conformity. Would such a multiculturalism ever identify with a coercive strategy, one that, because of the recognition of difference, would submit to the dominant model all those who still want to preserve socio-political traditions incompatible with the values of that model? For those already integrated into the global economic system, multiculturalism offers the possibility of social recognition as pressure groups, demonstrating a perfect mastery of the general political system in which actors play off one another to negotiate economic advantages and rights with federal and local authorities — concessions reminiscent of privileges, since they are just so many exceptions to the general rule. Such a fragmentation of socio-cultural interests can only receive the blessing of advanced capitalism. It constitutes no threat to its integrating power, but advanced capitalism benefits from it since multiculturalism displaces all political criticism of the real economic, cultural and social ravages produced by the extension of its rationality.[24] American paleoconservatives still complain about multiculturalism's permissiveness, but the most advanced capitalist sectors favor it, as becomes clear in its advocacy of the new cultural freedom offered by the most sophisticated communications media during the past decade, which have triggered such gigantic investments returning the highest possible legal profits.

As true archaism is disappearing, multiculturalism is developing the

23. See John Fekete's excellent book, *Moral Panic: Biopolitics Rising* (Montréal-Toronto: Robert Davis, 1994).

24. Among Republicans today who favor both the opening of borders and a free market, one finds ". . . libertarian ideologues (in the tradition of Hayek and Milton Freidman) and representatives of high tech industries. . . From the liberal perspective, immigrants are an ideal labor force — docile, disciplined, hardworking and perfectly assimilable in the long run. . . ." See Lacorne, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-89.

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notion of generalized alterity, which ends up turning neighbors, fellow subway riders, co-workers from other countries sharing the same literate culture — even one's mate — into strangers. With its posthumanism of difference, multiculturalism ends up making even the most familiar things feel foreign. Multiculturalism and its correlate, cultural alterity extended to the entire social domain, presents itself in the most advanced nations as an ideology concealing, through its very articulation, the only remaining real differences: economic disparities.[25] This is the final outcome of the metaphysics of infinity that made the West such a destructive conqueror of all real differences previously constituting the "rainbow of human cultures."

This multiculturalism, however, is not without contradictions that diminish its theoretical and practical effectiveness. Access to literate culture — what dominates not only the literary world, but even more that of science, industry and finance — is impossible without a mastery of Anglo-Saxon culture. When, in his June 14, 1997 speech at the University of San Diego, President Clinton argued for the establishment of an egalitarian, multiracial and multicultural society in the US, he assumed that such a society could only be Anglo-American. In the final analysis, what remained unstated is that it is a question of the omnipotence of monoculturalism. Thus the function of multiculturalism is to ideologically occlude the social impact of economic realities, the hyperfragmentation of society, and the isolation of individuals in the crowd of the wage earners and the unemployed. As the effect of the occlusion of economic reality from *homo homini lupus,* whom the orchestration of generalized desire forces into the most vicious of economic competitions, multiculturalism does offer some symbolic relief to those who submit to it. Even worse, fragmentation tends to make of society a collection of communities trying to appropriate particular rights that contradict the implicit harmony of this multicultural concept of the social and end up creating contradictory social interests that no higher state authority can resolve.[26] What remains is only the submission

25. Supporters of multiculturalism may well argue in favor of affirmative action, but this policy merely opens all of its beneficiaries to the same scientific and economic thought; the only difference it creates is in the action/reaction between communities that will benefit from it and those that will lose out. That is only one of the facets of world unification. Thus, in the long run one can imagine America torn apart by violent "ethnic" conflicts, with economic stakes, between groups speaking the same language, just as Ulster is torn between Catholics and Protestants.

26. On the theme of a new type of conflict tearing American society apart, se Richard Rorty's political-fiction essay, "Le grand retour de l'État-providence," in *Le Courrier international* 320-321 (December 19, 1996).

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of each and every individual to the economic order that designates dominators and dominated, those who make decisions and the overwhelming majority who bears the consequences.

Multiculturalism is no help for those whom hyperliberalism has not only kept out of consumer society but in fact reduced to abject poverty. The purely economic dynamic that frees capitalism from all collective responsibility is blind to the social catastrophes produced by its profit-driven rationality. It is precisely because of this that the metaphysics of productive infinity can flourish as a future free of all political and social projects restricting economic dynamics. From all evidence, the promoters of multiculturalism are economically privileged social strata. Multiculturalism turns their "cultural" demands into community values compatible with this future: they never threaten the foundations of the established order. On the other hand, if community demands are explicitly formulated as political and economic criticism, the system unleashes the most brutal force — that repressive force unions have fought against since the dawn of capitalism to gain democratic control of the economy. By responding in political terms to the challenge confronting the black ghettos, the Black Panthers paid with their lives for the lucidity of their analysis. When community struggle identifies with class struggle, it becomes unacceptable and dangerous. It is then that the good democratic souls of political correctness reveal themselves and proclaim loud and clear their true interests. At that point it is no longer a question of culture but one of criminality; it is no longer a question of symbolic tokens but of legal solutions that, once again, excludes those who articulate the only real differences. In such a case, the business of multiculturalism is handled by the police, the National Guard or, as during the 1995 Los Angeles uprising and for the first time since the Civil War, by the US Army.

By concealing the atomization of experience, multiculturalism is all the more linked to globalization under the aegis of an increasingly concentrated economic decision-making and an increasingly scattered production.[27] Hidden by often illusory differences, this fragmentation leaves people bewildered and with no alternatives, bound by the same destiny determined by the infinite multiplicity of productive processes and commodities. How can one fail to see multiculturalism as a product of the Western *eidos* — a new statement of its mode of being in the world —

27. Frédéric F. Clairmont, "Ces deux cents sociétiés qui contrôlent le monde," in *Le Monde diplomatique* 517 (April 1997); and Frédéric F. Clairmont and John Cavanagh, *The World in their Web: the Dynamic of Textile Mutlinationals* (London: zed, 1981).

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and as the camouflaged version of a monoculturalism not specifically European, Asiatic, or Middle-Eastern but inherent to late modernity?

So, in the US, at the center of the "Global Village," multiculturalism is increasingly unable to hide the failure of the melting-pot and the growing fracture of the social bond,[28] making this country, in Kenneth Galbraith's words, the most powerful on the planet and the wealthiest of all Third World nations. Today, this fracture of the social bond has become so serious that it is beginning to trouble people as different as George Soros, William Pfaff and Richard Rorty.[29] Each in his own way measures the social damage done by the hyperliberalism of an unrestricted market that imposes itself like a new religion. It is the deployment of an ontological truth, that of technology, that shrinks the world (like Jivaro headhunters shrink the heads of enemies they have killed in combat) to the few economic exchanges that the last avatars of dime-store Platonism try to conceal under the sign of an implicit multicultural harmony or, in a more legalistic formulation, the uselessly elaborate theories of Rawls' supermarket neo-Kantianism. Multiculturalism offers only impotent responses to this socio-political crisis created by capitalism, because its elaboration in no way lessens, through an ever stronger social atomization, what the real tragedy of late modernism reveals: a growing disjunction between wealth and poverty.

28. "That tendency (multiculturalism) has in recent years been reinforced by weakening of the traditional concept of America melting pot. The results in a loss of sense of 'common purpose' on which we must depend to establish a national consensus. Ethnicity has become the norm and to speak of the national interest in the abstract is simply to invite a rebuke." James Schlesinger, "A Commencement Address at the University of North Carolina," in the *International Herald Tribune* (June 4, 1997).

29. See George Soros, "The Capitalist Threat," in *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1997); William Pfaff, "U.S.-British Capitalism or Europe's Model of Social Capitalism," in the *International Herald Tribune* (December 15, 1995); and "Sommation à l'orthodoxie," in *Commentaire* 78, Vol. 20 (Summer 1997); and Richard Rorty, "Back to Class Politics," in *Dissent* (New York: Hiver, 1997).

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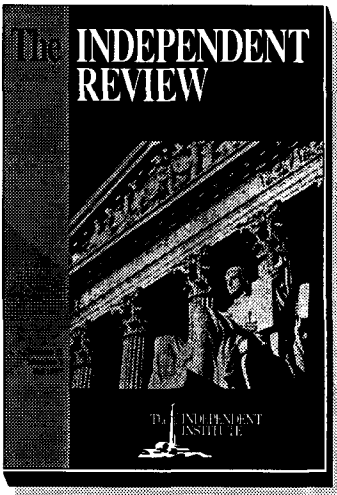

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Notes and Commentary:

On Dick Pels' "Strange Standpoints"

Nino Langiulli

The strange thing about Dick Pels' claim about the conventional view of knowledge in "Strange Standpoints" is that, in order for knowledge to be true, it must be "value-free, disinterested and universal."[1] Allegedly, the challenge to this conventional view comes from "standpoint epistemologies" which, to use the opposite terms descriptive of "true knowledge," are value-laden, interested, and particular. In short, "standpoint epistemologies" is an inflated term for what used to be and still is called subjectivism. Standpoint epistemologies are theories about knowledge claims. According to these epistemologies, any knowledge claim is always made from the perspective of the speaker (the view from *somewhere* in contrast to the view from *everywhere* or *nowhere*), whereby time, place, gender, race and class count as determinative of its truth-value. Pels mentions race, gender, and class as determinants, but he also makes the further distinctions of women and feminists, proletarians and speakers for proletarians (such as Marx and Ted Kennedy), women and feminists, black women and black feminists, and lesbian black feminists. Naturally, such categories ultimately collapse into the individual person.

One may be tempted to dismiss Pels' essay as a taking too seriously old fashioned epistemological relativism, but he does make some interesting comments, some of which are even true. The interesting ones have to do with the concept of "strange standpoints" which turns out to be a corrective for standpoint epistemologies. Those which are true have to do with such sentences as "Women's experiences, or the things women say, do not in themselves provide reliable grounds for knowledge claims." Pels is not a male chauvinist or, worse yet, a traditionalist. He maintains that "women's experiences . . . must be informed and corrected by feminist theorizing and feminist political engagement in order to create truly critical perspectives" (85).

The "three" standpoint theories (class, gender, race) require the "strange"

1. Dick Pels, "Strange Standpoints: Or, How to Define the Situation for Situated Knowledge," in *Telos* 108 (Summer 1996), p. 65. All subsequent references to Pels will be to this article, indicating in parenthesis the page number.

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standpoint or else they become "intellectualist" or "essentialist." "Standpoints," urges Pels, "need spokespersons [*sic*] in order to be constituted as such; it is their representational work that ultimately 'defines the situation' for 'situated knowledge'." Pels continues with the remarkable claim that "It is [feminist intellectuals] who actually occupy epistemically resourceful 'contradictory' positions ('a woman thinker is a contradiction in terms') and may therefore exploit the frictions and dissonances which arise between their disparate experiences" (87).

Several questions come immediately to mind. Is the whole statement true? If so, then there are some statements that are not standpoint statements or opinions. Furthermore, it can be accepted on grounds that do not presuppose any strange standpoints. If it is not true, then it may be false or a standpoint statement. If it is false, it is to be rejected. If it is a standpoint statement, then it may be checked (and thus turn out to be true or false), and anyone can find it out by checking it the way ordinary people check things or by the more sophisticated scientific check. If it is just standpoint, then it is just a subjective assertion. But then it is true that Pels has said it even though its content is neither true nor false, but just another opinion.

Is the statement "a woman thinker is a contradiction in terms" itself truly a contradiction or is it just a contrary?[2] Or is it neither? Is it just plain false, as everyone believes it to be — even male chauvinists and traditionalists? Thus Aristotle did not say that women do not think but that in politics their thinking lacks force or authority. Perhaps the statement is ironic or sarcastic? This is a reading most people would have of it. But the irony or sarcasm depends on the statement's opposite being true, i.e., a woman thinker is not a contradiction in terms. It is said that she is in order to mock those barbarians who might believe it. Pels does not take it as ironic or sarcastic, as the rest of his statement and the context implies. He believes it to be honorific, i.e., complimentary to women in that they have the conflicting experiences redolent of reality and therefore are better suited to make knowledge claims. Contradiction, in short, is a virtue. The confusion between contraries and contradictories remains and the reader remains baffled. To say that women have conflicting experiences and thereby can give a more complete account of reality is not to say that "a women thinker is a contradiction in terms." If "woman-thinker" were a contradiction in terms, one could not even conceive of a woman thinking,

2. Pels uses the terms "contradictory" or "contradiction" ambiguously. Does he mean contradictory or does he mean contrary when he says (or quotes someone else as saying) "a woman thinker is a contradiction in terms"? Contrary terms are such as: tall-short, hot-cold, pleasure-pain, man-woman. There is *usually* middle ground between contraries and they are opposites in the same class. Contrary propositions are such as: All snakes are reptiles — No snakes are reptiles; All men are mortal — No men are mortal; All women think — No women think. Contradictory terms are such as: tall-not tall; hot-not hot; pleasure-no pleasure; man-not man. There is *no* middle ground between contradictories and they are *not* opposites in the same class. Contradictory propositions are such as: All snakes are reptiles — Some snakes are not reptiles; All men are mortal — Some men are not mortal; All women think — Some women do not think.

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as one could not conceive of a mother not being a female parent or conceive of a circle being square. What is Pels talking about?

Consider again the opening statement of the essay. "'Standpoint epistemologies' have long counted among the most powerful challenges to the conventional view that true knowledge is value-free, disinterested and universal." The conventional view is that of ordinary folks who are epistemological realists and of such professional philosophers as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Reid. They know that some statements are true, some false, and some are opinions waiting to be proven true or false. But Pels' treatment of the conventional view is a caricature created by the false disjunction perpetrated on philosophy by modernity and postmodernity. For the truth about true knowledge is not that it is value-free but that its *value is* precisely its intention to be disinterested (i.e., not private), universally or at least generally true. The statement that Michael Jordan is taller than John Stockton is true and would be true for everyone, once they know who the two basketball players are. That water freezes when it gets sufficiently cold is true and true for everyone. The laws of physics and the propositions of mathematics are true for everyone. If there are counter-examples such as objects do not fall when they are out in space or that water does not freeze at 0° Centigrade in caves, this does not falsify the general truth. Such counter-examples are accountable by a more complete explanation and these explanations are accessible to everyone. The ruses of "the view from everywhere" or "the view from nowhere" are either the tricks of sophists who wish to be regarded as clever or wish to win debates. Or they are the false belief of those who think knowledge is possible only in the context of omniscience. As far as certainty is concerned, there is just as much as one needs. Those who need or want more simply have a false requirement for human knowledge, confusing the unlimited desire to know (which *is* human) with the unlimited possession of knowledge. Wanting to be God (and not *like* God) seems to lie behind the despair over knowledge in standpoint epistemology.

The fable of the blind men and the elephant may be useful to illustrate standpoint epistemology. Each of the blind men touches a different part of the elephant and declares that the part he touches and describes is the elephant when it is only the tail, the trunk, the tusk or the leg. What each of them knows is a part. What they describe is true of the part. If they infer from the part that it is the whole, their inference is false. They commit the metonymic fallacy, which Pels attributes to intellectuals. But what they know about the part is true knowledge, not opinion. The mistake is the false inference. This, however, does not prove that they have no knowledge. Nor does it prove that there is just a perspective or viewpoint. Indeed, the mistake or false inference is possible only on the basis of what they know.

The higher order false inference is made by standpoint epistemologists, for they claim that such a fable proves that we do not have knowledge but only a standpoint. Different viewpoints do not prove the absence of knowledge, only the presence of opinion. What is said from a standpoint can be true or false and this

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can be found out by anyone who attends to it. Falsifications contribute as much to knowledge as verifications. Being disinterested means freeing oneself from lies, prejudice, ideology and deceptions. It does not mean being *uninterested.* Do Pels and other class, race and gender attendants claim that such conditions rule out knowledge? If so, they fail to recognize that these conditions and much more important ones, such as the ability to perceive and the desire to know, are conditions of possibility for knowledge, not standpoints.

The interesting things that Pels has to say have to do with the notion of "strange standpoints." These proceed, as do most of Pels' assertions, from Marxian sociology, the chief idea being "alienation." According to Pels: "It is this convergent theme of the 'outsider within,' who enjoys 'double vision' which in my view establishes a powerful epistemological point, which might even be taken as the enduringly relevant 'summary' of standpoint theory in its various historical manifestations. What standpoint theories ultimately seem to offer is a more general or abstract *social epistemology of the stranger,* rather than a more concrete and particularized epistemology of class, gender, or race; an epistemology of diversity or 'crossover' identities, rather than the single and stable consciousness of 'taking responsibility for one's roots'" (73).

The "epistemology of the stranger" entails a recognition of a third position between the dominant and dominated classes of contemporary capitalism, and even more important, spells a return "to an element of the traditional 'transcendental' view of knowledge which standpoint theories have historically risen against." The stranger mediates between the politicized "view from somewhere" and the disinterested/universal view from nowhere. "It is the stranger," says Pels, "who somehow embodies and preserves the ancient philosophical promise of transcendence and distanciation" [*sic*]. Just when this glimmer of recognition on the part of Pels that truth and knowledge are public and therefore accessible to anyone who wants to know something, stranger or not, he regresses to "standpoint epistemology." For the stranger "simultaneously remains intensely place-bound, committed, interested, and partisan." Although "[t]he stranger moves across contexts and encompasses them in double vision," he "does not float above interests, but embodies a different interest" (75).

If the stranger is insider and outsider at different times under different circumstances, then the stranger is like Plato's Eleatic stranger, who in the *Sophist* instructs Socrates on the concepts of existence-nonexistence, sameness-difference and permanence-change — the ontological concepts on which all other knowledge rests. But if the stranger is both insider and outsider at the same time under the same circumstances, Pels has a contradiction which even he cannot sustain. It is plain nonsense, and he should give up trying to say anything at all. Indeed, he does not need the appeal to the stranger's viewpoint because it is either redundant or collapses into just another standpoint.

Pels' notion of the stranger and his viewpoint is a rightful and courageous

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attempt to move beyond the standpoint absolutized. The stranger or, better, the knower, starts from somewhere at some time and tries to say something about that sometime and somewhere that someone else can understand. In order to say something true or give an explanation, the knower does not need to be above interests or above contexts, but does need to begin from those interests and contexts to ascertain whether or not what he reports is cross-contextual and of interest to others. This is the meaning of the "different" interest of the stranger or the knower who wants to know; first and foremost, just to know. Just knowing is what makes the stranger different. If this knowledge can cross over to the domain of practice, so much the better and so much more is it trans-theoretical, trans-cultural and trans-historical. But it need not cross over to practice, such as some propositions of physics, mathematics and philosophy, such as those concerned with the speed of light, the area of a circle or the concept of difference.

It is difficult to say how Pels would classify many of the statements he makes throughout his essay. Are they true, i.e., fact? Are they universal? Are they true for the moment? Are they false? Consider some of these statements. "Given that all beliefs, including the best scientific propositions, are socially situated. . . ." (65). Pels speaks here of a fact and a universal proposition offered neither as a standpoint nor as the viewpoint of a stranger. Furthermore, on what grounds or viewpoint does anyone speak of the "best scientific propositions"? Does not speaking about the "best" here imply some knowledge, distinct from a viewpoint, which can be used to determine what is best; and even more important, what is worst? "In order to gain a critically objective view of society as a whole, the best method is therefore 'to start thought from marginal lives'" (68). Is this a fact? Is it possible to gain a critically objective view of society as a whole? From what Pels says elsewhere, it would not be possible. "[I]ssues of race always appear historically in articulation with other categories and divisions and are constantly crossed by categories of class and gender" (71). Always? Constantly? This looks like a compound universal statement. Does Pels mean it? Is it just a partisan view? "We are all ethnically located, but this insight calls precisely for a politics of ethnicity that is predicated on difference and diversity" (71). All? What does "all" imply? If, moreover, a politics of ethnicity is predicated on difference and diversity, then are the categories of difference and diversity objective categories? Furthermore, is politics then dependent on categories which are themselves not political? Might they be logical and ontological? Is talking about politics subject to logic? "This recurrent topos of alienation, and of the redemptive privilege of outsidership and marginality, remains a persistently magnetic theme across the entire history of standpoint theory, and only gains in visibility and pertinence in its present day elaborations" (72). Recurrent topos? Persistently magnetic theme? Entire history? Does this statement come from a strange standpoint? Is it false? Is it just Pels' opinion?

Elsewhere, Pels quotes another author uncritically. "Against such roots-and rootedness-oriented conceptions, Gilroy associates the black experience of

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modernity with 'the standpoint of dislocation,' and prefers to view identity as a process of movement and mediation, as a 'changing same'" (73). But what if home was a horror for blacks and coming to America was a blessing as Keith Richburg argues in *Out of America* (1997)? What is a "changing same"? If such a thing could exist, is it not proper to ask what in it changes and what remains the same?

The next series of statements *made* or *approved* by Pels will be offered without comment or question. From them the reader can infer that Pels truly holds neither a standpoint nor a strange epistemology but, for want of a better name, a traditional one. All standpoints "need to be *spoken* for in order to become constituted as standpoints in the first place" (76). "It is in all respects (feminist) theory which constructs and validates experience, and effectively dictates how 'to see strange'" (86). "In principle, therefore, it is not necessary to have lived the experience of oppression in order to understand other oppressed identities . . ." (87). Feminism "teaches women (and men) how to see the social order from the perspective of an outsider . . ." (86). The black women's "standpoint may not be clear to 'black women themselves; which is why black feminist *intellectuals* must produce facts and theories about the Black female experience that will clarify a Black woman's standpoint for Black women'" (81).

Pels is critical of standpoint epistemologies. He wishes to correct them with a strange standpoint epistemology at once particular and transcendental, but not quite universal. He recognizes that theories about "'situated knowledge,' in sum, are likely to suffer from a vicious circularity which results from their efforts to derive objectivity claims from ontological 'situations' which must first be 'defined as real' before such claims can be contextually 'situated'." As the foregoing passage illustrates, both he and standpoint theories acknowledge the relevance of objectivity to knowledge claims. He also tries to salvage a version of objectivity by means of the outsider-within character of the strange standpoint. The outsider-within embodies an interest which mediates other interests. As outsider-within, he/she can achieve "local transcendences," can take "third positions" and forge "partial connections," all of which achieve, in turn, a measure of synthesis and objectivity which is still available in the chronic 'war of positions' which is waged in the social world" (91).

Since standpoint epistemology and strange standpoint epistemology require the terms of ordinary traditional epistemology, such as all, truth, falsity, valid and invalid and many more, they add nothing to epistemological discourse. They belong to sociology, whose meta-sociological import is either redundant or so particular as to have no import beyond their particularity. Even standpoints have to be a view of something and have to depend on some knowledge even to be a standpoint and even if they are about power, which Pels more than suggests. Knowledge is logically and ontologically prior to standpoints, although standpoints may be temporally prior. Standpoints, strange or otherwise, would not exist if their *telos* were not knowledge.

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Reply to the Introduction to Telos *108*

Robert D'Amico

Before commenting on the "Introduction" to *Telos* 108 by Piccone, Berman and Ulmen, I want to cite two distinctions relevant to my discussion of it. First, federalism and populism are separate concepts, whatever it turns out is the proper meaning of populism and whether or not the intent of the Introduction was to argue for both. Federalism concerns a type of social organization held to be preferable for relatively complex commercial societies; the kind of societies that presently dominate the first world. It consists of relatively autonomous units united under a mutually agreed upon constitutional framework assigning strictly limited responsibilities and duties to a central state authority. Those powers not explicitly assigned to the federal state revert to the federated sub-units. Populism, ignoring for the moment the many different uses and connotations of this highly contentious term, defends either direct democracy or simply complete local autonomy as the sole legitimate expression of popular sovereignty. Though some populists accept representatives, such representatives are under conditions of immediate revocation and their use is restricted to special circumstances. In contrast, significant decisions are supposed to only occur legitimately by way of some expression of direct democracy and are defended for both immediate concerns as well as fundamental questions of principle. I will explain later why even the simple appeal to local autonomy must finally reduce to a defense of majoritarianism for populists, assuming I understand what this term basically means. [1]

Three points about these two concepts are obvious. First, federalism is the broader notion because it is compatible with a wide range of decision-making

1. There are two potential rejoinders to the objections I make with regard to the Introduction and I want to simply exclude them. It might be thought that my criticisms turn on whether or not one is a collectivist or an individualist with regard to social metaphysics. Though that is a complex issue, I want to simply claim that groups in the minority are as possible as individuals in the minority. Thus I think this metaphysical worry is not relevant and my point applies regardless of that position. Second, there is a traditional Marxist argument that majorities and minorities are vestiges of "bourgeois society." I of course reject this type of class analysis, but even if one wishes to keep it and the wholly discredited concept of the bourgeoisie, the point is that majorities and minorities do not literally disappear even in ideal societies. What happens is that there are reasons given for ignoring the difference. My objection is to the reasons given in the Introduction for ignoring the difference. Whether there are better reasons I leave for some future discussions. But as a rule of thumb I would be suspicious of any political theory claiming the difference is illusory.

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procedures. Thus a purely republican conception of federalism, perhaps some Aristotle-inspired model, would likely admit of no popular sovereignty in the form of direct democracy and would give appointed representatives almost total autonomy with regard to interpreting and implementing the federal agreement. The US' model, in contrast, is a Montesquieu-inspired arrangement of counter-balancing representatives (more and less autonomous), an elected presidency (but indirectly rather than directly elected by popular vote), and a largely autonomous judiciary with authority over both interpretation of the binding principles of the federation and adjudication of disputes between federal units; the decision-making procedures of the sub-federal units is not normally specified in such detail but has in practice mirrored the federal arrangement. Though complete direct democracy at the sub-federal levels is possible, it is obviously not necessary. Second, populism requires more argumentative defense than federalism and populism could be adopted for a society independently of that society having a federal structure. In fact, not only does populism require extensive clarification as to what it precisely means, but significant objections to populism, and not just by unnamed liberal ideologues as claimed in the Introduction, arise with regard to the implications of majority voting for such a wide-range of procedural and substantive issues and the precise limits of local autonomy. Third, if populism means that no other political device is acceptable or legitimate other than direct democracy or if populism simply means that local authority is inviolate no matter what, then it eventually becomes inconsistent with either the autonomy normally extended to the sub-federal units with regard to how they manage their political affairs (assuming those structures are specified in some fashion within the contracted constitution) or the "default" autonomy of citizens in a federation; both of these features, by the way, are usually cited as distinct advantages of federalism over other social systems. Since protection from arbitrary exercises of power and intrusions on a citizen's autonomy is a very strong reason to defend federalism, populism, at least in some of its many meanings, could weaken that defense. Whether restrictions are in fact legitimate depends on how the citizen's autonomy is restricted, how the decisions are made, and how the claims are legitimated. Unless one were lucky enough to always be in the majority or always in agreement with whatever is interpreted to be local autonomy, these issues will arise no matter what the mechanisms of the federal arrangement and no matter the reasons for potential restrictions. I will return to this objection after mentioning the second relevant distinction.

The second distinction concerns the difference between intra-federal disputes concerning the practices of sub-units in a genuinely federal arrangement and disputes between sovereign societies. These two types of disputes must be approached quite differently and certainly the same demands could not be made on other societies that can be made on sub-federal units within a constitutional structure. Various examples made in passing in the Introduction ignore this difference.

The objection to populism that immediately connects with the issue of racial

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prejudice, which is the only part of the Introduction I plan to discuss, is the threat of tyrannical majorities or local autonomy as a justification for excluding participation by or interfering with the lives of other citizens. Let's assume that the direct democracy works by a simple majority. (For purposes of the following it does not matter how this decision-mechanism is specified, but it is worth noting, in passing, that paradoxes about majority voting need to be discussed by populists who ought to offer some modification of simple majority votes for complicated sets of preferences or decisions about political principles). The problem of autonomy is violated whenever one finds oneself in the minority and when the decision in question involves some interference, intrusion, or arbitrary exercise of power over those in that minority. Obviously racial prejudice is a case of such potential interference (but there could be many other cases and many more complicated cases than those of racial prejudice) and, as already said above, if the argument for federalism were that it protects its members against the exercise of arbitrary power, the break-down of such protection at the local level (given the likelihood of at least some cases of tyrannical majorities) would be a serious short-coming. Therefore, most discussions of federalism, and I assume reflective and thoughtful populists would also consider such questions, involve countering the effects of these potentially tyrannical majorities. Traditionally, protection has been built into the constitutional framework and it is precisely the existence of such protection and a commitment to citizen autonomy as the "default" position in society that provides another reason for the federation to see itself as not just a loosely knit group.

If, on the other hand, the argument is that populism simply means that local autonomy is sacrosanct no matter what is decided and no matter how it is decided, then this version of populism has the added weakness that it underdetermines the answer to any significant political conflict. Since any exercise of local authority will exclude or impinge upon the interests of some other group, the preservation of autonomy requires that such an exercise of that power be justified in some fashion and furthermore that the decision be debated and discussed. But if the aim of such a majority were to exclude some from public life or even extensively restrict their participation, then the very debate would be, in the future, itself restricted. Thus such a defense of populism would require much more detail than simply appealing to the sacrosanct nature of its local autonomy. The only response that I can think of which still seems populist to me is that local autonomy must finally amount to direct democracy with regard to interpretation of the meaning of the community's practices and their application to individual cases. Thus tyrannical majorities are both a theoretical and practical possibility once populism enters into the federal arrangement.

Given all of the above, let me now return to the Introduction. The Introduction begins with Heribert Adam's "Anti-Semitism and Racism," published in the same issue. It claims that Adam provides a useful tool for understanding the problem of racial division in a way that contrasts with the now dominant liberal conception,

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which the authors deride. (The Introduction treats liberalism as a conception of rights interpreted narrowly as legal claims. This narrow definition is linked to an idiosyncratic use of the term liberalism which has become current, but, though I don't agree with this overly narrow picture of liberalism, arguing against that definition is not relevant to my point). After showing how Adam's article is supposed to enlighten us on current issues with regard to race, specifically how the article is supposed to show the limits of legal challenges to racism in the form of affirmative action and civil rights legislation, the Introduction then criticizes Adam's ideas. I disagree with both the proposed use of the article and the subsequent criticism of it.

I begin with the supposedly positive contribution. The Introduction claims that "rational racism" applies to the current disputes listed above and furthermore disarms the ideological function of liberalism. Liberalism, the introduction suggests, is the ideology of a class of state bureaucrats whose interests and careers require extending and supporting the power of the state over the activities of subfederal units. Thus, these bureaucrats support, due to their own self-interest, legislative strategies against racial prejudice as a kind of mechanism by which their power is extended and legitimized and by which they demonize their opponents as racist. Therefore, liberals have not considered the possibility of there being rational racists whose beliefs and decisions escape this liberal analysis. (I have objections to the notions of class and ideological analysis standing behind this complex claim, as well as the notion of bureaucratic self-interest, but these wider issues have to be set aside for some future discussion).

What is rational racism? Adam's article, which I plan to ignore here, makes a distinction between two kinds of society, not a distinction within a single society. I have considerable doubts about the historical accuracy of Adam's hypothesis that South African apartheid is a case of rational racism and German Fascism a case of irrational racism. But again that dispute is too large a digression. It is a weakness of the article that Adam does not clearly explain what is the difference between these forms of racism and the Introduction adds little in way of clarifying the distinction either. But I will suppose that a rational racist is aware of his views, able to discuss them critically, and is prepared, at least hypothetically, to give up those beliefs, without recourse to coercion or violence, if presented with some appropriate kinds of evidence and argument.

Now I certainly don't want to deny that there are such persons, though I doubt that most racist beliefs are of this sort. But that whole issue is irrelevant. First, it is wholly unclear what the Introduction's use of Adam's article is meant to support. The Introduction wants to argue against what it calls liberal policies about race; for example, accusations of racism against those who oppose gerrymandered hiring policies, affirmative action patterning, or those who oppose tolerance of criminal activity on the basis of racial solidarity are examples of what I take the Introduction to oppose. The Introduction first suggests that the distinction between rational and irrational racism is a good argument against these accusations of racism and thus against

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these liberal policies. Whatever Adam's intent, this idea of rational racism is not a good argument against the above policies. The reason is very simple. Those, like myself, who oppose these policies are not doing so because we are racists — rational or otherwise. There are entirely non-racist reasons to oppose those policies, which are the reason I oppose them. Now of course others may oppose these policies because they are racists — I cannot speak for everyone — but the strongest arguments against these policies are the non-racist ones. If one introduces the category of a rational racist — whatever that may finally mean — it simply confirms the opinion of those who support the above policies in their belief that racism is the key motivation in opposing them. The Introduction seems, then, to have accepted the assumption of those it seeks to criticize by stigmatizing opposition to affirmative action or certain aspects of civil rights legislation (the Introduction does not specify what aspects of the legislation is abusive) as racist; albeit rationally racist. Since the assumption is questionable, this whole argument is a serious misinterpretation.

Second, the question of whether restricted participation in normal social activities, voting, or education by some designated group could be legitimated if there were majority support for it, if it were rational (whatever precisely that means), and if it were imposed within a federal structure does not depend on how the beliefs are held by those who vote or decide in this way. If rational and irrational racists happen, by the force of circumstances, to agree about some social policy, then it makes little difference for those restricted or restrained as to which is which. Adam goes on to suggest (and the Introduction agrees with him on this point) that a society of rational racism could, however, change non-violently. But the issue, at least at the theoretical level, is not how difficult or dangerous it will be to change the decision. The issue is that a certain conception of popular sovereignty enshrined in populism, for instance, makes the claim that it is possible, and furthermore it is legitimate, that the majority can restrict a minority in this way. That some of the majority are willing to listen to arguments against their beliefs is a hopeful sign, but again it does not change the reality of the tyranny and its inconsistency with federal autonomy. And if the tyranny extends to public participation of those in the minority, then it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that there will be no effective debate against the decision.

The Introduction, however, also agrees that there are problems with the rational racist concept and proceeds to criticize it after having offered it as a useful tool. But the criticism made of Adam's idea is at first reading pretty odd. It consists of making an argument that there is no distinction between rationality and irrationality anyway; a relatively trivial example of a fallacious argument since to accept its conclusion is to reject the argument. Since I can't believe that the authors meant something so clearly counter-sensical, the argument must be read more charitably; even more charitably than its wording suggests. What it says, I think, is not that it can establish by way of arguments concerning conceptual schemes and modern epistemology that there is no distinction between rationality and irrationality (that

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would be a "broken-back" strategy, as it is called), but the more restricted point that different societies make the distinction between rationality and irrationality in different ways. (Though even this point ignores the rejoinder that as long as there is mutual communication between such societies, there would of necessity be basic agreements presupposed such that these differences would be intelligible to each side.) It is consequently the grey area between the two categories which shifts as we consider widely diverse social structures. But this rereading of the Introduction again reveals its irrelevance to the issue since it fails to pay attention to the second distinction cited above, namely the difference between intra-federal and extra-federal disputes. What is important about the problem of racial prejudice is its potential as an intra-federal dispute. It is less pressing to realize that two societies may disagree about questionable beliefs or practices of exclusion since there are then no binding federal, constitutional agreements between them.

How might the intra-federal issue of prejudice be answered? I think the use of racial distinctions as a basis for restricting social activities is a relatively simple problem for political theory, especially if one begins with federalism. I don't mean that there has not been, and continues to be disagreement, confusion, anger, and violence over race; nor do I deny that a simple question of political theory can often mean a complicated political practice. But this effort to legitimize such restrictions simply does not require any new theoretical innovations or reflections. Belief systems which support racial distinctions with regard to social activities involve arguing that secondary racial features, for instance, justify limiting the social activities of those who happen by birth to have those secondary features. These beliefs are not only lacking in even minimal levels of plausibility these days, but they are simply not relevant even if it were believed they were true and that there were some causal links between secondary racial features and morally or politically relevant features. Even if there were irrefutable evidence that some defined group of people had a biologically inherited violent or criminal tendency, that would not allow them to be singled out and denied their status as citizens in a federal state; at least as federal states are currently defined. It is of the essence of a federal structure that political participation in the society, except in those cases explicitly excluded in the constitutional agreement (normally the restricted cases are for actual rather than potential criminal behavior, childhood, and of course non-citizenship), can neither be restricted nor infringed upon even if the proposed restrictions have majority support. I consider it part of the inherent wisdom of these constitutional traditions that they shun any pseudo-scientific speculations or even widely held beliefs concerning whether or not certain people or groups can participate in society. Therefore, it does not matter if people acquire racial beliefs rationally or hold them no matter what others say or do. In principle there is no argument for implementing these beliefs in the fashion discussed above, at least no argument within a principle-based federal system. The one clear exception would be if the constitutional agreement specified the exclusion of

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some sub-group, as was the case with regard to an early interpretation of the U.S. Constitution on the issue of racial slavery. The interpretation was subsequently altered by legislation. It is again a sign of the inherent wisdom of the federal conception of society that the binding agreement can be altered by its participants as long as a specified procedure is followed.

The Introduction is obviously concerned with abuses that arise from efforts to correct past effects of such racial discrimination. These are proper and difficult questions which raises complex issues about rectification of past harms, a proper definition of prejudicial behavior, and confidence that future harms are not outweighing the rectification of past harms. Perhaps these issues should be discussed at greater length in the future. But my point is that nothing about those issues is aided by either the concept of a rational racist or the argument that the distinction between rational and irrational behaviors varies among different societies.

My last concern is not over the substance of the argument in the Introduction, and I think I have already shown that its substance is seriously flawed, but in an admittedly vaguer point concerning the tone of the Introduction. It seems to revel in a rhetorical stance which embraces the absolutism and extremism inherent in the populist tradition. Specifically, the Introduction always treats the issues I have discussed as though their very existence were due to no more than the bad intentions and ill-will of unnamed bureaucrats and greedy, unprincipled advocates; namely the machinations of those who claim, in a self-interested fashion only, that they want to correct these abuses. I doubt that these assumptions are either correct or fair. The Introduction also sounds as though it extends a good deal of tolerance, at least implicitly, to those who might find in populism support for gerrymandering participation in society, either formally or informally, so as to exclude those with the wrong size noses, the wrong DNA, the wrong education, the wrong religion, the wrong hair color, the wrong family background, etc,. by appealing to the mysterious, unfathomable and thus unchallengeable authority of tradition or, even worse, to the arrogant and rather fantastic conceit of dubbing oneself as rational in one's desire to exclude these others. The Introduction's flirtation with relativism when discussing rationality and irrationality would actually be welcome with regard to its own accusations of ideology and bias on the part of those who would oppose such an unqualified conception of populism or think that such an extreme reading of local autonomy is implausible. By never taking seriously the possible arguments of well-intended and sympathetic critics, such as myself, and thus not taking seriously real objections to the kind of solutions it hints at (rather than the objections of conveniently invented opponents), the political theorizing within the Introduction quickly degenerates from critical thinking to a disturbing kind of militant advocacy; and whether that militancy is of the left or the right matters little to my disagreement with it. What the Introduction does not offer is a persuasive way to understand these very central social problems.

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Liberalism vs. Populism

Moishe Gonzales

Terminally associated with drugs, unbridled hedonism and general irresponsibility, since the late 1960s "radicalism" has been systematically discredited. Today no one thinks of it as having anything to do with "going back to roots" but, at best, as a youthful indiscretion, usually pushed into oblivion by a 30-year mortgage, a couple of kids or, for academics, tenure. Yet the re-examination of foundations remains essential to any critical perspective seeking to transcend the immediacy of the given and to avoid a comfortable conformism which distorts the present by idealizing and hypostatizing it to the level of a universal standard against which all other possible alternatives are judged. From such a critical perspective on what over a generation ago Adorno described as "identity logic" and Marcuse as "one-dimensionality," historical contingency becomes frozen within an unacknowledged ontology embedded within instrumental rationality, while its dynamism and heterogeneity are displaced by ideal forms, deviance from which becomes the explanation of all social dysfunctions. The persistence of this kind of conformist mentality may explain some of the reactions to Heribert Adam's provocative article on Nazi Germany and Apatheid South Africa, proposing to distinguish between "rational" and "irrational" forms of racism.[1]

What is ultimately at issue in these reactions is not just the nature of racism in different countries, as the "Introduction" to the issue in which the article appeared tried to explain, but the predominant view of the status of knowledge, political organizations and belief systems which, predicated on a dogmatic Enlightenment ideology, reifies its serial interpretation of the given as "natural"

1. Heribert Adam, "Anti-Semitism and Anti-Black Racism: Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa," in *Telos* 108 (Summer 1996), pp. 25-46. What makes Adam's account unpalatable to its liberal critics is the branding of any form of racism as "rational," while hermeneutic critics object to characterizing systems such as Apartheid or Nazism as "irrational." By scientistically reducing racism to, e.g., restrictions on social participation on the basis of "secondary racial features" and dismissing it as a belief "lacking in even minimal levels of plausibility" — as if fundamental beliefs could be characterized as "plausible" or "implausible," i.e., dependent on prior conditions — critics such as Robert D'Amico cannot accept any kind of "rational" racism. See his "Reply to the Introduction to *Telos* 108," in this issue of *Telos*. On the other hand, those who accept the primacy and irreducibility of fundamental beliefs cannot legitimately judge qualitatively different systems of thought as either "rational" or "irrational," and thus have to regard them all as self-referentially "rational." For a systematic discussion of these positions, see John W. Tate, "The Hermeneutic Circle vs. the Enlightenment," in this issue of *Telos*.

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and "necessary," while degrading all other traditional forms as arbitrary and, therefore, "irrational." Thus the most diabolical features of Nazism tend to be dismissed, not as an utterly unacceptable yet internally coherent components of an otherwise "rational" system, but as irrationalities and pathologies which, as such, automatically legitimate the predominant system as "rational" and "healthy."[2] This is the subtext of Robert D'Amico's objections to the "Introduction" to *Telos* 108: an idealized caricature of the US political system is hypostatized to the level of the *only* type of federal system, some of its problematic features translated into ontological necessities and, repackaged with an aura of scientific authority, used to discredit any attempt to vindicate local autonomy, self-determination and the freedom to act on what appear to be "irrational beliefs."

D'Amico prefaces his critique by distinguishing between federalism and populism. Since no one has ever suggested that the two are the same or even in the same conceptual ball-park, it is not immediately obvious why he bothers to dwell in such a detail. In the rare instances in which the two have been joined, as in discussions of "federal populism," both concepts have to be used precisely because they are such different kettles of fish. D'Amico's real target, however, becomes clear only later in his critique and turns out to be much more ambitious than the simple clarification of a harmless conceptual distinction. His ultimate objective is to show that federalism and populism are actually contradictory and, in order to make his case, he recycles standard distortions of both federalism and populism currently popular in American political science. In a way surprisingly reminiscent of recent American history, he deploys a "rational" federalism to contain and rectify an "irrational" populism.

Misreading Federalism in General and US Federalism in Particular

That D'Amico is off on the wrong foot of confusing what he thinks is the American federal model for federalism as such is clear from his opening claim that federalism "concerns a type of social organization held to be preferable for relatively complex commercial societies; the kind of societies that presently

2. Aside from having to explain how such an "irrational" system not only arose in the midst of Western rationality but came within a hair of conquering all of Europe, such a viewpoint is immediately confronted with the problem of demonstrating rather than automatically assuming its universal validity and the pathological character of any deviance, be it Nazism, populism or any other unorthodox framework in a non-self-referential way, i.e., by recourse to its own criteria. This dogmatic and circular character of Enlightenment rationalism was already criticized extensively during the Enlightenment by people such as Edmund Burke, David Hume, *et al.* For a summary of the latest round of discussions concerning the untenability of modern varieties of traditional Enlightenment rationalism, see Tate, *op. cit.* The more radical reading of the Nazi phenomenon as the culmination of, rather than an aberration from, instrumental rationality, was provided first by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. by John Cumming (London: Allan Lane, 1973); and then by Zygmunt Bauman in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Polity, 1989).

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dominate the first world." Actually, the opposite is the case, and the language used betrays the real ideological target. "Complexity" and "commerce" have historically prefaced calls for unitary rather than federal systems, for centralization rather than dispersion of political authority. Planning, bureaucratization and globalization are often incompatible with any political formation such as populism, concerned with safeguarding particularity and local autonomy, while fully in tune with nation-states historically committed to homogenizing every crevice of social reality. Similarly, federalism is by no means an exclusively first world institution nor anything very modern. It is even more widespread in the so-called third world than in the first, can be found in many tribal societies such as the Iroquois of upstate New York, and can be traced as far back as the political organization of the ancient Israeli tribes or to Greece, whose Achean League[3] became the paradigm of federal governance up to the 18th century, when the concept of "federalism" finally came into common usage.[4] Far from being merely an academic detail, a forceful rejection of the modern roots of federalism and of complexity as its historical justification is crucial here, since it is precisely this kind of distortion which in D'Amico's account eventually makes federalism incompatible with the presumably anti-modernist and uncomplicated nature of populism.

The confusion of the particular US federal model with federalism in general is even more obvious when D'Amico argues that all federal constitutions contain the equivalent of the 10th Amendment to the US Constitution and assign "strictly limited responsibilities and duties to a central state authority. Those powers not explicitly assigned to the federal state revert to the federated sub-units." There are two major problems here. First, it is simply false that *all* federal systems necessarily subscribe to the principle of subsidiarity embodied in the 10th Amendment or otherwise severely restrict the scope of central authority while leaving jurisdiction over everything else to the constituting sub-units. It would be more accurate to say that this amendment is an idiosyncratically American exception rather than the rule. One needs only look at Article 91 of the Canadian Constitution to find exactly the opposite stipulation: "It shall be lawful [for the central government] to make Laws for the Peace, Order, and good Government of Canada, in relation to all Matters not coming within the Classes of Subjects by this Act assigned exclusively to the Legislatures of the Provinces . . . ."[5] Second, and more importantly, even in the US, after the war between the states, the 10th Amendment was marginalized by the 14th Amendment and the federal government has managed to

3. J. A. O. Larsen, *Greek Federal States. Their Institutions and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).

4. The concept was actually invented in the 16th century, but at the time it had more of a theological than a political meaning. See Rufus S. Davis, *The Federal Principle: A Journey through Time in Quest of a Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

5. See Department of Justice, Canada, *A Consolidation of the Constitution Acts 1867 to 1982* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), p. 26.

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reduce the various states to mere administrative subsidiaries. While all states have their own vast administrative apparatuses, they have become terminally dependent on Washington's funding and only on rare occasions (and then often concerning rather trivial details) is anything deemed exclusively a state matter. One need only consider how the legal system, historically purely a local matter, has gradually been federalized and, even in cases which remain within the state's jurisdiction, they are almost invariably subject to review at the federal level — notwithstanding constitutional protections against double jeopardy.

Had D'Amico been more attentive, he would have realized that, although the 10th Amendment today plays hardly any role in the US, the question of its status is far from settled and remains a major issue of contention. Although throughout the 20th century US Supreme Court decisions have consistently upheld the primacy of the 14th Amendment and of "the commerce clause" at the expense of the 10th, the issue keeps resurfacing and recent Supreme Court decisions have been supported only by weak 5-4 majorities. Furthermore, there is a sizable populist movement for reinstating the primacy of the 10th Amendment (mostly in Western states), which is exerting considerable pressure to return to the *original, ante-bellum* model of federalism D'Amico inadvertently describes as federalism *sic et nunc*. Were one Supreme Court justice to change sides the next time the 10th Amendment is considered, the consequences would be enormous. Since the US Constitution makes no mention of the myriads of federal departments currently regulating practically every aspect of the lives of American citizens, if the primacy of the 10th Amendment were to be restored it would not only be a major victory for populism but would precipitate a substantial reconfiguration of the federal government. Although as a rule state constitutions do not contain the equivalent of the 10th Amendment and are not necessarily organized along federal lines (and therefore would be able to function as unitary states no matter what happens at the federal level), the vindication of the primacy of the states would go a long way to re-establishing local autonomy — at least to the extent that states are more "local" than the whole US.

Jacobin Ideology vs. the American Federal Model

This hamstringing of his argument against populism and local autonomy by misreading the 10th Amendment both as *sine qua non conditio* of federalism and as something having anything to do with the *de facto* functioning of today's US government is not fatal to D'Amico's case. By subsequently appealing to the federal constitutional guarantee of individual rights bypassing state and other lower jurisdictions, he ends up effectively re-marginalizing any local autonomy and self-determination. Here he takes as unproblematic one of the most fundamental and unresolved contradictions of the US Constitution: the direct relation between American citizens and the federal government via the Bill of Rights. Originally formulated by the anti-federalists as a check on central power, this Bill of Rights

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has turned out to be utterly counter-productive by providing the federal government with the justification (along with the 14th Amendment) for bypassing and eventually marginalizing the states as autonomous and sovereign political units. It inadvertently introjected Jacobin ideology into an American constitutional framework concerned not only with individual liberty but, first and foremost, the defense of those local traditions vindicated by the Scottish Enlightenment but completely obliterated by its French counterpart.

By regarding as solved what is likely to become one of the most important political issues in the 21st century — the end of big government and the restoration of local autonomy and self-determination — D'Amico's ideal model of federalism also takes this idiosyncratic feature of the US Constitution as a necessary condition of all federations (although here he is more careful and calls it a "default" condition or one "normally extended to the sub-federal units"). But as Carl Schmitt, Max von Seydel, John C. Calhoun and other constitutional jurists argued decades ago in evaluating the outcome of the war between the states, this peculiar predicament — a federation based on a democratic foundation — is a contradictory one and eventually results either in the federation becoming a *de facto* unitary state, as has happened in the US, or in the break-up of the federation.[6] Although he seems intent on defending federalism, D'Amico in fact ends up reinterpreting it as the kind of unitary state the US has become, which is actually more consistent with his anti-populist sentiments.

At any rate, while the Founding Fathers were obviously very concerned with individual freedom and power abuses, they were equally adamant about local autonomy and community self-determination. After all, their forbearers had come to America in order to escape religious persecution and all forms of higher authorities they did not themselves recognize. The Revolution began precisely as a rejection of "taxation without representation." It is ironic, therefore, that in their obsession with containing central power and safeguarding local autonomy and community self-determination — what Enlightenment ideology sought to obliterate — the anti-federalists ended up unwittingly buying into that same Enlighenment ideology of human rights — the secularized residues of transcendental attributes of the soul which the French Enlightenment recycled as the only defining characteristics of abstract individuality.

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6. See Carl Schmitt, "The Constitutional Theory of Federation (1928)," in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), pp. 26-56. What is in question here is not individual rights as such, but the empowering of a powerful federal government. There are obviously other ways to guarantee individual liberty without having to pay such a high price such as, e.g., making the presence of a Bill of Rights within the constitutions of the lowest political units a condition for becoming part of the federation. To those who warn that there is no guarantee that these rights will actually be respected at that level, it can be pointed out that the same can be said of the federal government, which for decades also ignored them altogether. In other words, democracy within federations concerned with remaining federations cannot be a federal matter but must be one pertaining to the individual constituting units.

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The Perils of Populism

What does all this have to do with D'Amico's idealized version of federalism? Simply this: unless federalism remains a contract among sovereign political units willing to forfeit only sharply defined parts of their sovereignty (the American model) in order to retain maximum community autonomy, the new political system degenerates into a centralized and homogenizing nation-state (the French Enlightenment model) recognizing no mediational institutions between itself and its citizens. Furthermore, the distinct advantage of federations over unitary political systems is that they guarantee the heterogeneity of the constituting units, i.e., their unhindered adherence to local traditions and customs. D'Amico fears that populism will support "gerrymandering participation in society, either formally or informally, so as to exclude those with the wrong size noses, the wrong DNA, the wrong education, the wrong religion, the wrong hair color, the wrong family background, etc. by appealing to the mysterious, unfathomable and thus unchallengeable authority of tradition." He is obviously right. What he seems to forget, however, is that there are no transcendental judges of what constitutes the right or wrong size noses, DNA, education, religion hair color, family background, etc. What is "plausible" or "implausible" is not a federal matter but the exclusive prerogative of the particular communities. He thinks that "such an extreme reading of local autonomy is implausible." Implausible to whom? Here is where the New Class subject must reveal its identity either as that of the agent of a disembodied "universal" reason located in no particular place with no distinct traditional framework, or grounded in unacknowledged and long-forgotten theological moorings. In the first case, the dogmatic Enlightenment ideology of New Class ideologues staking out abstract knowledge and reason as their power base is all too obvious; in the second, it is clearly a matter of the imperialism of a particular culture imposing its own vision of universality on all others — since the ultimate criterion of real universality is that it is in fact shared by all, without branding dissident cultures as "ignorant," "evil," or "pathological."

D'Amico is right on at least one point: populism does legitimate cultures practicing what from other perspectives are terminally unsavory, such as racism and other forms of "arbitrary" discrimination. But no community is under any obligation to federate with any other whose practices it finds incompatible with its own and, of course, there is always the risk that one's neighboring community or state may become Nazi, totalitarian etc. In such cases, appeals to universal reason are clearly beside the point and it becomes a matter of power relations. In the US, this issue was confronted in its most extreme form in the middle of the last century, immediately before the war between the states (it is inaccurate to call it a "civil war," as nationalist ideologues have done ever since the North won, because the US was not a unitary nation at the time but a federation — one of whose necessary conditions was precisely the possibility of the constituting units to secede). Even if slavery had been the real issue precipitating

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the war,[7] Lincoln had no business forcing some states to remain in the Union if they wanted to bail out. In order to preserve the federation, the South should have been allowed to secede and then maybe attacked for legitimating unacceptable practices such as slavery. But that would never have happened because it would not have been possible for the North to assemble a popular consensus to declare war on the South simply because the Confederacy allowed slavery. So did parts of the North! At any rate, the point is that appeals to reason alone are useless in delegitimating cultures with allegedly unsavory practices. As the recent examples of Rwanda and Bosnia clearly indicate, ultimately it is a matter of power relations.

A similar objection can be made to D'Amico's reservations concerning populism's emphasis on direct democracy. While direct democracy is not a necessary feature of populism, since in principle nothing prevents communities from adopting whatever decision-making procedures they wish — from consensual to representative forms — what is at stake here is the rejection of any *a priori* principles binding on *all* societies, unless as political entities they have entered into a specific federal agreement to abide by some particular principle. This is why D'Amico's obsession with majorities and minorities also misses the point. It is an issue only for societies explicitly predicated on abstract individuality. Far from being a trivial detail, this is essential to understand contemporary *de facto* American imperialism, especially as it was exemplified by the incessant pounding of the Chinese with "human rights" during their leaders' recent American visit. While there is nothing wrong with trying to persuade one's trading partners to abide by US value standards, to impose them is nothing but covert imperialism.

Populism is not a panacea. But its problems are certainly not greater than those of other political systems. Before complaining about "the limits of local autonomy" and self-determination, D'Amico should consider the alternatives. If all self-determination is not ultimately local, what is it? Here the "rational" pretenses of the New Class and those of totalitarianism become increasingly indistinguishable. After all, did the Enlightenment not lead to Napoleon?

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7. For a recent account of the economic reasons for the war between the states — an account increasingly being challenged from various sources by scholars emphasizing slavery as the ultimate determinant — see Patrick J. Buchanan, "Mr.Lincoln's War. An Irrepressible Conflict?" in *Chronicles* (October 1997), pp. 13-22. Despite his claim that the war was not necessary to free the slaves and his critique of Lincoln as a manipulative politician with little respect for truth or honesty, Buchanan, being a nationalist, concludes that, right or wrong, the war did preserve the Union and therefore Lincoln deserves all the credit for such an important deed.

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Reviews:

Theology and Deconstruction

Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing. On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (New York: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1997), xiv+273 pp.

Catherine Pickstock's book is about Catholic liturgy. What does it have to do with political theory and philosophy? *Telos* has recently been concerned with the problem of modernity — especially its rationalism and the domination of the sovereign state. Both of these problems have come to the fore with the fall of the Soviet Union in the East and the rise of postmodernity in the West. These same problems have their counterparts in theology. Modernity and postmodernity have not left the churches untouched. One of the most important consequences has been the reform of Catholic liturgy in the late 1960s. Up to that point Catholic liturgy had been, in the technical sense of the term, premodern. In 1969 an important revision in the liturgy took place and this revision, in Pickstock's view, bore all the marks of modernity: it was based on the rationalism of the Enlightenment. As soon as the "new liturgy" came into being, however, postmodernism hit popular culture and religion. Thus, in a few decades, both modern and postmodern transformations took place within Catholic practice. The Church now has to decide how to relate to its more ancient liturgy. This quandary parallels that of contemporary political philosophy. This is not an accident. Politics and religion both call for final allegiance and the two are often in conflict. In fact, in her book, Pickstock claims that all rational conduct finds its completion in doxology. Both rational inquiry and political life need religion — especially liturgy. Thus she argues, the political and the religious dimensions are not merely parallel, but the former finds its highest expression in the latter. Politics must be distinguished from religion, but way in which the two have to be distinguished remains to be clarified.

Pickstock's book is of interest for two reasons. It describes the extent to which problems in the Church parallel problems in political philosophy and it shows the central role of religion in politics. The book is difficult to summarize because it takes on many different philosophical and theological topics and deals with them in surprising ways. It is mainly about Catholic liturgy, but it also discusses Plato, Scotus, Peter Ramus, Descartes, Robert Boyle, Kierkegaard, modernity, postmodernity, literary theory, politics and the nature of philosophy.

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Catholic Liturgy

The center of Catholic liturgical life is the Mass. In 1969 Pope Paul VI authorized a change in the structure of the Roman Rite — the rite followed by the western Church. That rite had hardly been changed for about a thousand years and its central prayer (its "canon") had remained substantially unchanged for some fifteen hundred years. The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) had called for adaptations in the rite and the liturgists developed a form that went into effect in 1969 as the "New Order of Mass." The new rite was to replace the old. Upon its introduction, the further public celebration of the Old Rite was expressly forbidden. In 1988, however, Pope John Paul II declared that the Old Rite could be publicly celebrated, but only with the permission of the local bishop. At present, practically all the Masses said in Catholic churches follow the New Order. Old Rite Masses are in about half of the 150 dioceses in the US, but only in a few designated churches in each diocese, at specified times.

The New Order of Mass is generally accepted by most Catholics. One of its attractions is that it is in the vernacular and the priest "faces the people," so that the congregation can see more clearly what is being done. However, there have been some serious abuses in the performance of the new liturgy. Even when reverently celebrated, many people miss the solemnity of the Old Rite and its continuity with Church tradition. Some claim that the New Rite has led to a desacralization of the Mass, in practice if not in principle: the Eucharist now seems more like a community gathering than a sacred act of worship. Many features of the Old Rite were abandoned in the New: the introductory prayers were changed, the prayers at the Offertory were largely discarded and new, simpler ones put in their place, new "canons" were introduced, etc. Since the Eucharist is the center of the Church's life, it is not surprising these changes in it have led to heated controversies in the Church. In a recent interview, Cardinal Ratzinger claims that many of the difficulties now facing the Church stem from the hasty reformulation of its liturgy. Current controversies about "gender-inclusive language," the status of the Catholic priesthood and Church teaching in general, are obviously related to the liturgical changes adopted during the 1960s.

One of the most pointed critiques of the liturgical "reform," by the British theologian Aidan Nichols, claims that the liturgical reformers were influenced too much by Enlightenment concepts of reason and religion and that their transformation of the liturgy eliminated or at least downplayed elements that may have been premodern but were essential both to Catholicism and to the human spirit.[1] He quotes from Catherine Pickstock's doctoral dissertation, completed at Cambridge University in 1996 and titled "The Sacred Polis: Language, Death and Liturgy." That dissertation was an earlier draft of *After Writing* and was written under the direction of John Milbank. She is one of several people in England

1. See Aidan Nichols, O.P., *Looking at the Liturgy. A Critical View of Its Contemporary Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

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attempting to reconnect Catholicism with its more traditional practice, teaching and language. Thus her book was not written in isolation, but can be seen as the culmination of the work of many other scholars.[2]

Modernity and the Institutionalization of Sophistry

The title of the book, *After Writing*, is reminiscent of deconstruction and its subtitle, *On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, suggests that philosophy has to go beyond itself, to religious worship, to find its completion. The book contains six chapters equally divided into two "Parts," with a "Transition" between the two. Part One, entitled "The Polity of Death," begins with an interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus*.[3] Pickstock claims that in the dialogue Socrates and Phaedrus go outside the city into the natural world, where Socrates finds indications of divinity and praises the divine, thus perfecting his philosophical inquiries, while Phaedrus is blind to the divine and therefore misunderstands what reason is. He takes its "products" as commodities that can be bought and sold, accumulated and concealed; he is a sophist who wants to control language and the "objects" it discloses. Thus, in the *Phaedrus*, Plato shows that the sacred completes the rational, religion perfects reason, and language is given its stability and meaningfulness through "doxology," its praise of the divine: "Genuine intellectual clarity is obtainable only when that which is to be 'known' is allowed to remain open and mysterious: an attitude synonymous with a kind of reverence" (p. 20). When language is deprived of this praise of the gods, it loses focus and can no longer designate the natures of things. It is no longer subordinated to truth but something to be manipulated — an instrument of power instead of disclosure. It becomes a fixed written thing rather than a spoken expression of the way things are.

Pickstock's argument in this chapter is a relentless criticism of Derrida's reading of Plato in his essay, "Plato's Pharmacy." She insists that Plato does not interpret being as sheer presence. Rather, for Plato the good always presents itself partially and does so in localized, individual places, things and persons, at definite moments ("the good arrives through time" [p. 13]), while always remaining mysterious and hidden; it is beyond presence and absence: "As the source of all light, the sun is more difficult to see than anything else, but it is a beneficent mystery which lets things be seen in their true nature, while itself remaining but obliquely visible" (p. 11). Furthermore, the self presented by Plato in the Socratic life is not simply interior and ironic, as Derrida claims, but open to the truth of both myth and nature and supplemented and deferred by its willingness to listen to what others have said in the mythic tradition: "There is no metaphysics of presence here, but rather an infinite series of speakers and traces of memory" (p.

2. Others are Eamon Duffy, John Scarisbrick and Stratford Caldecott.

3. A version of the first chapter, "Socrates Goes Outside the City: Writing and Exteriority," was published in *Telos* 107 (Spring 1996), pp. 9-44 as "Plato's Deconstruction of Derrida."

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19). She claims that, with his emphasis on writing and the emptiness of sheer deferral, Derrida himself has adopted the sophistical stance of Phaedrus and misinterpreted Plato's critique of a degenerate morality and language as an expression of Plato's own position: "It is therefore sophistry and not Socrates which is to be aligned with capital and a suppression of difference" (p. 6). Plato strives for a true "dissemination" of the life of reason through education of the soul and even through intelligent writing; he refuses only the sophistic "arbitrary or undifferentiating dissemination" (p. 23) of commodified bits of information which, Pickstock says, is the only kind of dissemination Derrida recognizes. Pickstock also claims the Socratic life opens the possibility of a city not based on the externality of contracts and exchanges but on the life of reason and the love of the good, and this city will have as its highest expression the praise of the divine. Following Plato, she says that "liturgy is the highest form of language" (p. 40) and that "the city itself becomes a kind of music" (p. 41). This civic "festivity," however, is again misinterpreted by Derrida "as a kind of riot" (p. 41).

In Chapter 2 ("Spatialization: The Middle of Modernity"), Pickstock moves to the modern age. She studies the methodology of Peter Ramus and the methodology and ontology of Descartes and claims that these thinkers and those who followed in their train adopt the sophistic viewpoint expressed by Phaedrus, which is now strengthened by the format and the successes of modern science. Being becomes "spatialized," language occurs more in a written than an oral mode, printing confirms this freezing of language and reality becomes reduced to what can be surveyed and controlled by the "Cartesian measuring gaze" (p. 21): modernity aims at "mapping all knowledge onto a manipulable grid" (p. xii). In language, nouns (which name simple objects) predominate over verbs (with their relation to activity and situatedness); asyndeton, the drawing up of sheer lists of things, replaces complex syntax, with its intelligent and subtle modulation of how things can be expressed. (Preferring a computer printout to an essay is a vivid example of how asyndeton can overcome grammar.) Political life is also transformed in "the theatrical city" of the baroque age, in which the absolute monarch is presented as the central and omnicompetent viewer of his subjects and their landscape — a viewer from whom nothing is hidden. The individual is reduced to a solipsistic subject and epistemology replaces ontology as the core of philosophy: "the given is perpetually threatened by doubt" and method replaces memory (p. 70). With memory no longer central, the flexible identity of the self gives way first to a rigidly designated punctual ego, then to nothing at all in the postmodern recoil.

Chapter 3 ("Signs of Death") summarizes the ontology of modernity. Modernity chooses the spatial, the visual and the written over the temporal, the heard and the spoken. Pickstock says that modernity introduces radical separations between things that should be coordinated and blended. It separates life from death (instead of seeing death as a possible entrance into life) and presence from absence (instead of seeing them as mutually implicated; whatever is present

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to us always holds things in reserve and whatever is absent and hence mysterious is recognized as such only because aspects of it are present). In wanting to have sheer life without death and sheer presence and control without absence and mystery, modernity winds up possessing only emptiness and death; it is "necrophiliac": "As soon as subjects and objects are located within an undying space, they are paradoxically robbed of life and of any genuine bodily content" (p. xiii).

In these first three chapters (Part One), Pickstock interprets modernity as a sophistic rationalism that provokes a postmodern reaction not as its contrary but its mirror image: "Nihilism is but the most extreme expression of a humanist rationalism" (p. 48). Postmodern nihilism is not the opposite of rationalist modernity, but modernity showing its true face: postmodernism is just modernity after it has gone through the looking-glass. Both modernity and postmodernity are variants on the sophistic approach to language and being already sketched by Plato as a human possibility (or, more accurately, as a failure in human possibility).

Pickstock's "Transition" claims that the proximate antecedents of modernity can be found in the thought and practice of the Late Middle Ages. She says that the work of John Duns Scotus — his metaphysics, his theory of distinctions, his epistemology, his political theory and his theology of the Eucharist — contains in germ the lapses of ontology and human understanding that will flourish in modernity. Scotus introduces univocity into basic metaphysical notions (in contrast with the Thomistic analogy of being) and thus flattens out being and prepares it for the spatialization and formalization that occur later. He also introduces "uniform time" and prepares the way for the "mathematical physics of Galileo, with its protocol of the substitution of acceleration for motion." (p. 139) Scotus' emphasis on the possible over the actual and his doctrine of the formal distinction contribute to these developments.

Furthermore, according to Pickstock, Scotus' theory of the Eucharist is also culpable; he takes the Eucharist less as the action of the sacred city and more as a miraculous event detached from the context that gives it meaning. It has no analogies in any other domains of being but is the work of an arbitrary and sovereign divine will. In the Late Middle Ages, "the Church itself becomes more and more a legally defined and contractual body, while the notion of the Church as formed through the Eucharist was gradually lost" (p. 149). Both the world and the city lose their sacred character and the door is opened to the return of sophistry: "Before the dominance of sophistic writing could return, the liturgical city had first to forget and misrepresent itself" (p. xiii). Scotus' doctrine of the freedom of the will, in both God and man, prepares the way for Cartesian voluntarism and for an extrinsicist understanding of politics. Because the will is unleashed "from teleological determination, the political order must instead presume the imposed structures of a formalized and legalized practical reason," and "the Scotist will becomes depoliticized" (p. 136). Thus, in all domains of culture in the Late Middle Ages, "a liturgical ordering of society was giving way to an organization in terms of the exercise

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of pure will and power divorced from love" (pp. 139-40). Paternal authority and relations of kinship lost their force and the roles of guilds, fraternities and other prepolitical societies, in which people could act and social needs could be met, were eroded. Such societies had been incorporated into the Eucharistic action of communities in the High Middle Ages, but now their works were taken over by the state and charity became replaced by taxation. The peace that had been the right ordering of the parts of society under the guidance of a liturgy now became imposed by the "sovereignty of the monarch or, later on, the state" (p. 148).

The Liturgical Alternative

Part Two, "The Sacred Polis" (the foil to "The Polity of Death" of Part One) is where Pickstock develops her theology. Her main claim is that the liturgy of medieval Christendom brought to perfection the praise of the divine described by Plato. The Eucharist is an even better "consummation of philosophy" than Socrates' doxology. The 1960s liturgical reforms, however, led to a loss of some of its most important features.

In the first chapter of Part Two ("I Will Go unto the Altar of God: The Impossible Liturgy"), Pickstock takes a phrase from the introductory prayers of the Old Rite. At the foot of the altar, the priest would recite the words, "I will go unto the altar of God, *Introibo ad altare dei*." She uses this image of "going toward" to describe the kind of motion that occurs when approaching the altar. From a worldly perspective, the prayers of the Old Rite expressed it as a contradictory movement: one moves toward but never arrive, one is already there and yet only beginning, the goal is beyond and yet within, the prayer asks for the possibility of the praying. The Christian "must arrive before he can travel" (p. 191). Liturgical reformers found such recommencements and repetitions confusing and distracting and strove to clean them up and simplify them. Pickstock, however, claims that such "liturgical stammering" is an appropriate way of speaking in the liturgy; it is not just the result of uncoordinated historical additions to the Mass over the centuries; it expresses the mysterious action and the "impossible journey" of the liturgy. In praising the divine, we are always somewhat at a loss. Furthermore, the "self" who speaks in the liturgy is also ambiguous and not fixed, clear and punctual: sometimes the prayers have the celebrant speaking in his own voice or in the voice of the people, sometimes he speaks the words uttered by angelic choirs, sometimes he speaks the words of Christ, sometimes he speaks as a petitioner, sometimes as a penitent, sometimes as representing the people. The Mass is an "impossible liturgy" because it is not like a human voyage but a perpetual approach to the altar of God.

In her discussion of the liturgy, therefore, Pickstock makes use of familiar themes in deconstruction to show that the speaker and the meaning are essentially decentered and ambiguous. She claims that such deferral was beautifully expressed in the complexity of the Old Rite. The reforming liturgists wished to eliminate such

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"disorder"; Pickstock quotes the liturgist Joseph Jungmann, who complained of the "veritable jungle" (p. 179) of the old Offertory Prayers. The reformers' discomfort, however, was caused by a rationalist desire to make everything neat and clear, mapped on a liturgical grid. Their work drained the liturgy of its appropriate hesitancy: "They ironed out the liturgical stammer and constant re-beginning" (p. 176). Furthermore, they took the text as a written an not an oral thing: "They imposed such anachronistic structural concepts as 'argument,' 'linear order,' 'segmentation,' 'discrete stages,' and the notion of 'new information' . . . on a text whose provenance and theological context is wholly oral and apophatic" (p. 175).

Pickstock also claims that the liturgy of medieval Christendom expressed a "liturgical philosophy" and realized it "more consistently than with Plato." (p. 169) In other words, the philosophical life fulfilled in Socrates' praise of the gods is even more perfectly fulfilled in the Christian Eucharist and the theological life that surrounds it. She claims that the old Roman Rite "provides a model for a genuine consummation of language and subjectivity in and through a radical transformation of space and time" (p. 169). The various dichotomies of modernity and postmodernity (such as writing versus orality, space versus time, subject versus object, life versus death) are overcome. She claims that while the liturgical reformers after the Second Vatican Council wanted to get back to a simpler, more primitive liturgy, in fact they were not radical enough: "they failed to challenge those structures of the modern secular world which are wholly inimical to liturgical purpose" (p. 171).

After using deconstruction to validate the Old Rite, Pickstock reverses course and criticizes deconstruction itself, claiming that Christian liturgy provides an alternative to its nihilism. The "impossibility" of the liturgy, its apparent contradictory character, she says, "does not, as with postmodernism, indicate a suspension over the abyss, but rather, the occurrence of the impossible through Christological mediation" (p. 178). Christian Eucharistic faith "unites life and death as resurrection" (p. 187) and allows the subjectivity that worships God to achieve an "analogical identity" (p. 178). Indeed, the human journey toward God and the human attempt to give to God is only a pale image of the "existential space of the Trinitarian journey" (p. 182), the life that subsists in God among the three divine persons. Liturgy, she says, transforms concepts of human action and agency, refusing the "post-Cartesian understanding of action, which assumes that self-present and yet punctual and empty, undefined subject acts by mastering a clearly grasped but inert object" (p. 192). This modern picture of the agent, furthermore, is not overcome but merely reformatted in postmodernity, where the self is "intensified in its punctual emptiness" (p. 192). In contrast, the liturgical subject "does indeed have a substantive, though not completed identity" (p. 192).

Pickstock claims that in liturgy the literary form of apostrophe, of addressing the absent, replaces the "nominalization," the emphasis on nouns in the third-person, that dominates in the speech of modernity and the speaker of prayerful apostrophe finds his "subjectivity enacted and fulfilled" (p. 208) because the "zenith"

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of his personal continuity is seen "to reside in God" (p. 208). In the liturgy, there is a "polyphonic texture of voices" (p. 213). The worshiper "impersonates" the voices of the Church, angels and even of Christ and such impersonation allows him to participate in them; "impersonation precedes our 'authentic' voice" and "qualifies us to become ourselves" (p. 209). The conclusion is that "genuine subjectivity is only attained through such divine permutations," while a subject that appears purely self-identical (as in the Cartesian picture) becomes "reducible to a subject under erasure, an ironic void" (p. 213).

Chapter 5 ("Seraphic Voices: The Space of Doxology") turns from speakers and language to space and time. Modernity highlights uniform space, making it a kind of replacement for eternity and it neutralizes time: it attempts "to substitute a unicursal, abstract and purely immanent ordering of reality for both eternity and time" (p. 228). In contrast, Pickstock claims, the Eucharist provides a "redemptive critique of secular time" (p. 221). Liturgical space is not opposed to time: the Eucharist here and now repeats the past events of the death and resurrection of Christ, the Last Supper and the Passover and it anticipates the end of time and it does so because of its contact with the living eternity of God. Pickstock draws an analogy between the liturgical restoration of time and the temporality of speech: "The word arrives both from the past — the remembered tradition of language — and from the future — as that which can only arrive because of the futurity of each subsequent syllable. . ." (p. 221). In liturgical time one anticipates more than is present at any given moment; even Christ's institution of the Eucharist "only becomes an event by virtue of its subsequent repetitions" (p. 223). In her treatment of time, Pickstock also discusses the notion of an "evening sacrifice" and the role of incense in the liturgy (it exists only as consumed through time), as well as the complex syntax found in the Eucharistic prayer and in the Gloria and Creed.

The interplay of space and time is further developed by showing how spatial categories can be used to express God's own transcendence. God is said to be beyond place and yet related to it; he "situates sites themselves," and while "one might speak of one's own occupation of space, one can only speak in terms of God's *preoccupation* of space, for He occupies space even before there is a space and occupies it more than it occupies itself" (p. 229). In his relation to God, the worshiper "is figured as a pilgrim," and he is contrasted with "the devotee of purely chthonic, local gods, or the cosmopolitan sage, an unhomed nomad who refuses the specificity of place, at home everywhere and so nowhere." The participant in liturgy is "neither autochthonous nor homeless," but belongs to "a place which is always elsewhere" (p. 233). Thus "liturgy temporalizes space, ensuring that it is mobile, supplemented and deferred," but this does not mean that time conquers space; if it did, it would lead to a "pure flux whose 'presences' are yet mere illusions, like the postmodern void" (p. 234). The situated place of the liturgy is therefore both transcended and preserved (p. 232). The chapter ends with an extended treatment of the concept of gift in the liturgy; peace and citizenship

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are available in the sacred city, which Pickstock contrasts with the ancient city, in which not everyone could be admitted to participation. The special character of such gifts, peace and citizenship is brought out: the liturgical gift brings the worshiper into the "perpetual bestowal of gifts which takes place within the Trinity," and through it people are constituted "as genuine subjects, defined as that which gives" (p. 241). The gifts offered are not a bartering with God; we "cannot surprise God with gifts" (p. 247) because as Creator He is the source of all gifts and giving.

Finally, Chapter 6 ("The Resurrection of the Sign") shows how the Eucharistic liturgy restores meaning to language. Pickstock claimed that in the *Phaedrus* Plato shows that language must culminate in doxology if it is to be capable of being meaningful at all. In this chapter, she claims that the Eucharist achieves its highest doxology in the central words of the Eucharist, through which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ: "This is my Body," and "This is the cup of my Blood." Despite appearances these are the truest words that human speech can contain: the "transubstantiation" of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is not just a "vulgar transition" (p. 258) of one substance into another but the presencing of the divine nature, the sheer *esse* of God, which had become incarnate in Christ. The words localize the divine nature present everywhere as the creative force that gives everything being and in doing so these words, "far from being problematic in their meaning, are the only words which certainly have meaning and [they] lend this meaning to all other words" (p. 263). The Eucharist, therefore, "situates us more inside language than ever" (p. 262).

Pickstock shows how her understanding of liturgical language overcomes the dichotomies of presence and absence, life and death. Such language can come to terms with modernity without falling into postmodern excess. She first admits that "outside such a structure of plenitude, signs *are* empty and everything Derrida says about the sign is profoundly right." However, she claims that liturgical faith, as expressed by Plato and perfected by the Eucharist, provides such a structure of plenitude: "Without faith, Derrida is correct and yet the construal of the sign by faith remains a rational possibility and exposes the fact that Derrida has not offered an undeniable or exhaustive transcendental account of the sign" (p. 265). This is an excellent summary of her critique of deconstruction. She observes that faith validates reason: the meaningfulness of signs is "a rational possibility." She also observes that Derrida's failure is that he has not taken seriously all the options available: his understanding of the sign is not "undeniable or exhaustive." The chapter then claims that the Resurrection is the condition of possibility of narrative or story because it is the paradigm of being brought to life again: "Every story is a resurrection story. . . . Jesus' story is at once the story which makes stories possible and the impossible story which never ends" (pp. 265-66).

The final issue in *After Writing* has to do with the inadequacy of Platonic doxology and the need for Christian liturgy. Here Pickstock appeals to the phenomenon of a religious tradition and an ecclesial community. Whereas Plato requires the

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preexistence of the soul, Christianity claims that an "absolute divine 'past' is not mediated to humanity first of all by an act of privileged or tranquil recollection of what was glimpsed in a prior existence by an individual soul, but rather by time and by the interpersonal series of a tradition" (p. 270). Also, unlike Plato, Christian faith looks toward the future and not primarily toward the past. Furthermore, the Trinitarian God is different from Platonic divinity; the Trinity is "an eternally supplemented reality, always both 'before' and 'beyond' its logos," and this transcendence "secures a divine self-sufficiency, without reduction to presence" (p. 270); for Plato, on the other hand, the divine needs to be manifest in time. Finally, in Christian faith the individual's life is irreplaceable; Christ's life is paradigmatic and it is repeated in the lives of the faithful. In Plato, however, the individuals' lives and the narratives are not "commensurate with the truth they narrate" (p. 271).

Radical Orthodoxy

Pickstock not only uses deconstruction to show the value of traditional Christian liturgy, but also deploys Christianity's intellectual resources to criticize modern rationalism and postmodern nihilism. Her defense of what she calls "radical orthodoxy" is spirited, confident and insightful. She addresses current issues by unabashedly drawing on the full Catholic tradition. These approaches will make it increasingly harder to marginalize Christian thought in contemporary cultural discourse. Her grand picture of the history of thought is matched by the detail of her analysis of texts such as the *Phaedrus* and Peter Ramus' *Logike*. She uses an abundance of secondary sources, all appropriate to the historical period being discussed. Especially noteworthy is her use of Walter Ong and his mentor Marshall McLuhan, whose work anticipates some of Derrida's best insights. The book abounds in striking and quotable formulations: her phrase, "one cannot isolate one part without summoning the whole" (p. 207) is an excellent statement of the basic principle of hermeneutics, which she applies when she says that each celebration of the Mass is achieved "with equal originality" and the story is retold "in endlessly new first versions" (p. 200). Also, the reality presented in the liturgy "is never exhausted by its own arrival" (p. 239). She uses some of her best metaphors in her criticism of modernity, where the "punctual" subject is said to be "that which wields panoptic sway over the 'given,' mistaking this for a primary relationship with the world" (p. 239). She speaks of "sophistic 'virtual reality'," (p. 42) and makes an interesting point concerning the philosophy of nature when she says that modernity, "by exalting epistemology, ensures that there can be no concealed or spontaneous forces in matter, which concomitantly denies corporeality its full potential" (p. 239). As these citations show, the book's contribution is not just theological. It has much to say concerning philosophy, political philosophy, semiotics and literary theory and develops a fine vocabulary for doing so.

There are, however, five possible criticisms that one can make of the book. First, in Chapter 3 Pickstock accepts Derrida's "deconstruction of Husserl" (p.

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106) and suggests that one might turn with greater profit to the "alternative phenomenology" of Merleau-Ponty. It is surprising that, after being so critical of Derrida, she should so naively accept his reading of Husserl. Derrida's interpretation of Husserl in *Speech and Phenomena* is little more than a bad joke. Not only does he fail to take Husserl's later philosophy into account; he does not even do justice to the *Logical Investigations*, the work on which his book is based. In fact, Husserl's phenomenology provides abundant resources for precisely the theological and philosophical issues Pickstock discusses. He offers a subtle treatment of the interplay of presence and absence and the identities presented through them. Pickstock's remark that liturgy redefines objectivity "as holding a depth of absence and spontaneous initiative" (p. 198) is an excellent formulation of Husserl's own understanding of being. The overcoming of epistemology, the interweaving of future, past and present in temporality, the role of syntactic structure in language, the place of tradition and its appropriation, the varied nature of evidencing, the subtleties of the ego, are all richly developed in his work, in a manner that is close to Plato's thought. Husserl is the most successful critic of modernity in the past century. A greater use of phenomenology would have given Pickstock's book just the philosophical closure it needs.

Second, Pickstock seems at times to say that only Christian belief can avoid deconstructionist skepticism and establish the meaningfulness of language ("without faith, Derrida is correct" [265]). She admits that Plato does stabilize language through doxology, but claims that Christianity brings his insights to perfection. In the High Middle Ages, "Christianity had extended and perfected the Platonic doxological account of meaning" (p. xiv). To preserve the validity of words and signs, she seems to require the "genuinely infinite" presence that is offered to Christian faith (p. 265). More can be done with a purely natural philosophy than Pickstock implies here. It is modernity, not reason as such, that fails to recognize the meaningfulness of language. Philosophy can define itself within Christian revelation, but it can also discover itself apart from such faith; the examples of Plato and Aristotle bear witness to this power. Maybe philosophical wisdom needs a doxological component and one might well claim that biblical religion intensifies this doxology and the intelligence that accompanies it, but more weight should be given to philosophy as a natural possibility. Phenomenology itself could be seen as an attempt to recover philosophy on its own terms, apart from biblical revelation.

Third, Pickstock's arguments, at the end of the book, as to why Christian belief surpasses Plato, would be better coordinated if she appealed to the deeper understanding of the divine at work in such faith. The God worshiped in Christian belief is different from the Good and the One of Plato: he is the God who could be, in undiminished goodness and greatness, even if the world did not exist. Pickstock alludes to this point when she describes the Holy Trinity as being self-sufficient and transcending its revelation, but she mentions this as only one among a number of differences between Christianity and Plato. The

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Christian understanding of the divine nature, the Christian way of distinguishing between God and the world, is the pivotal element in the transition between pagan religion and biblical belief. It opens the logical space for the special kinds of presence and absence, life and death, time and timelessness that occur in the liturgy. It allows the paradoxes in "the impossible liturgy" to be mysteries and not irrational contradictions.

Fourth, there are some problems with Pickstock's treatment of Scotus. Her section entitled "Transition" may locate the roots of modernity too facilely in his writings. Timothy Noone argues that Scotus is part of a much wider transformation of Scholastic discourse. Noone claims that Scotus' teaching on the univocity of being is directed not against Aquinas' doctrine of analogy but against Henry of Ghent, who had already modified the Thomistic theory. On many of the issues discussed in Pickstock's book, it is Henry, not Thomas, who is the point of departure for Scotus' thought. There are other issues that could be questioned in Pickstock's reading of Scotus. Thus Scotus says that it is the *concept* of being (not being as such) that is univocal. It is not surprising, however, that a book that covers such a wide range of issues might contain controversial interpretations in regard to details.

Fifth, her remarks about political life in modernity could be deepened by a study of Slade's concept of sovereignty.[4] Pickstock develops some of the features of the modern state when she describes the "theatrical city" of the baroque age and the absolute monarch who ruled in it also when she speaks about today's commercial city; she relates this form of political life to many themes in modernity (such as the spatialization and rationalization of public order) and she contrasts modern politics with the ancient Platonic understanding of political life. All these observations would find a deeper grounding in the "metaphysics" of modern sovereignty described by Slade. He shows that the modern state is not a natural form of human association but a philosophical construct, which considers itself no longer a contemplative activity but a power of ruling. This claim to rule appears rationalist at first (during the period of modernity), but at its core it is purely voluntaristic and has been revealed as such in postmodernity. It rules not only over other minds but even over itself; it is not ordered toward truth but lives simply to assert itself.

Pickstock's book stirs things up on a very deep level. She addresses many urgent historical and theoretical issues. The most immediate and disturbing question she raises is whether it is possible for individuals and societies to thrive without doxology.

Robert Sokolowski

4. See Francis X. Slade, "Rule as Sovereignty: The Universal and Homogeneous State," in John J. Drummond and James G. Hart, eds., *The Truthful and the Good* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996).

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Postmodern Theology?

John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion Without Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), xxix + 379pp.

This book is long and heavy with the loyal trudge of Caputo's feet trailing after the now unremarkable heels of Jacques Derrida. Allegedly, he is a religious thinker after all, anti-Hellenistic, more Jewish than Levinas, more religious than the "determined religions," more mystical than the mediaeval mystics, more negatively theological than the negative theologians, more *god* even than God, since Derrida's *khôra* apparently goes beyond the contrast of God and not-God, showing that a God contrasted to atheism is merely onto-theological. These would be impressive claims if one felt that Caputo had first, understood theology, and second, offered a critical assessment of Derrida's thought. Instead, this book is in its own way "fundamentalist": it misrepresents the theology Derrida is supposed to be outwitting and sidesteps many of the crucial contradictions in Derrida's thought. To make matters worse, all this is said in an American accent which tries too hard to sound French: "As Jacques says to Derrida, as 'Jackie' says to Jacques, and I will not presume to intervene in this dialogue, to interrupt this self-affection, which evidently gives him considerable pleasure, except to graph it a little. . ." (p. xviii); "*Oui, oui.* The yes comes from him to us, to 'you' (he means us), and to him from a distant time and place, from who knows where. He is 'convoking invoking provoking,' we are responding, yes, language is happening, *il y a la langue*, the impossible is happening, yes, the *tout autre* is breaking out" (p. xxiii). At the end of each chapter, Caputo provides an "Edifying Divertissement," No. 1 through 6 ("Treat these rash outbursts as so many little sermons in between the readings, or as a bit of organ music while we take up a collection. . ." [p. xxix]). One can but think of feet perhaps more at home clogging or line-dancing in crocodile hide boots now squeezing into velvet pumps and straining a cotillion or a quadrille.

Caputo's book traces in considerable detail Derrida's most recent works, in which a certain "religiosity" seem to be surfacing, and, in spite of its purpleness, the text offers good summaries of Derrida's main arguments in relation to negative theology, the "secret," "hauntology," the Other, the *khôra* and justice, as well as accounts of deconstruction, *différance*, sacrifice and the gift. However, in sustaining his devotions to Derrida, Caputo offers crude caricatures of the theology of Plato, the Jewish prophets, Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Meister Eckhart, and Kierkegaard, and rather dated accounts of negative theology, mysticism, prayer,

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faith, creation and above all the category of religion itself, while overlooking the ways in which Derrida's "religion" itself falls into a bad metaphysics.

Caputo is unaware of the false oppositions which form the basis of Derrida's critique of negative theology. In claiming that Derrida is "more prophetic than apophatic," he signs up to Derrida's opposition of the prophetic tradition and the mysticism of the Christian Neoplatonists. He argues that the former discourse is more inscribed by the futurity (and hence temporality) of the promise than by a silent union with the eternal (and hence timeless) One, and is thus more intensely drawn by "prophetico-ethico-political aspiration than by aspiring to be with the One" (p. xxiv). The "non-knowing" of deconstruction does not, it is claimed, fall within the invariant transcendental realm of the Hellenistic *eidos*, but is a bodily bleeding or circumcision away from the absolute and toward the Other.

In sustaining this opposition of the Judaic and Neoplatonic traditions of theological discourse, Caputo also leaves in place Derrida's assumptions regarding knowledge and language. Derrida construes theological knowledge as falling within a culpably metaphysical dialectic of negativity and positivity. On the one hand, he claims, Augustine's question, "What do I love when I love my God?" is bottomless, wholly devoid of its goal, "as much a sigh and a hope and a prayer as a question." The question is seen to arise from a rupture between language and knowledge, and a negative desire determined as lack: "For we do not know what we desire" (p. 3). On the other hand, the theological knowledge of the negative theologians is seen to presuppose a superlative presence. Their God resides "outside the text" (p. 11), as a "transcendental signified . . . outside the play of traces." Apparently this One is timelessly and wordlessly apprehended in a private maieutic moment, a "triumph of presence over representation" (p. 11). The "wounded breached" writing of negative theology, therefore, "has an affirmative end" (p. 43), and its "attempts to empty itself of content, to deprive itself of the very name of God" are undertaken for fear of engulfing the otherness of God, "to save the name it crosses out."

Caputo's (and Derrida's) account of the prophetic and apophatic traditions is, however, deeply flawed. There can be no simple opposition of the prophetic and the apophatic. As Herbert Marks has indicated, the stammering and repetitive structure of biblical prophecy has a strongly proleptic character, which is precipitated not by the sublime barrier of messianic distance or unbridgeable futurity but by a context of realized eternity whose sublime unassimilability precipitates a linguistic projection of repetition and vocal obstruction.[1] The prophetic stammer is at once this eternity's actualized expression and an expression of its inexpressibility in a seeming dichotomy which, because of its transcendent context, is not in reality a dichotomy at all. Indeed, in *The Star of Redemption,* Franz Rosenzweig associated Judaism with eternal presence and Christianity with a religious significance

1. Herbert Marks, "On Prophetic Stammering," in Regina Schwartz, ed., *The Book and the Text* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 60-80.

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given to temporal events. After all, most eschatological movements in Judaism, Hasidism and the messianic movement around Sabbatai Sevi emerged from the Jewish mystical tradition. (Derrida must be aware of these circumstances, and it is unlikely that he would altogether subscribe to this dualism of the mystical and the prophetic. Maybe the seams of the velvet slippers are beginning to split).

Inversely, the mystical traditions were, *contra* Caputo, frequently concerned with bearing an ethico-political witness to justice, so the disjunction between the eschatological and the eternal cannot rigorously be sustained. Indeed, M.-D. Chenu isolates the central contrast between the late mediaeval Christian mystical movement and the monastic seclusion from, and denunciation of, the world as the former's concern with "the shaping of an evangelical truth to a determined socio-political form."[2] More recently still, the work of Michel de Certeau, Rowan Williams and Frederick Bauerschmidt have underlined the ethico-political and eschatological dimension of Christian mystical thought,[3] and exploded any opposition of the modes of prophecy and mysticism.

As to the question of the nature of apophaticism, Caputo and Derrida's insistence on reading a dialectic of disingenuous absence and triumphant presence into the theology of mysticism is also dubious. Caputo, following Derrida, seems fixated on a duality of either (1) knowledge, or (2) ignorance, excluding the possibility of a third epistemological position, the *mysterious*, operating halfway between the disclosed and the not-disclosed. To insist on an exclusive dichotomy of either positive knowledge or absolute ignorance is to remain within the indicative mood of metaphysics which simply sustains the Aristotelian law of the excluded middle. It is precisely the "middle" category of the mysterious, which is only genuinely possible when one admits the transcendent and so understands that no appearance is ever a thing's exhaustive arrival, which means that Augustine's desire does not mundanely lack its "object." For Augustine, although one can never overtake the transcendent God with one's knowledge, since God is not an ontic being, one nonetheless can never desire emptily. One can only look for or desire what one in a certain sense already knows. Because of this, knowledge of God in Augustine is somewhat like a Derridean trace (rather than a metaphysical object) insofar as it is at once present and absent. Its trace-character is both a matter of historical legacy, in such a way that one cannot separate personal knowledge from the tradition and, at the same time, transcendental in the sense that it points to a history always already begun. (No one, however primaeval,

2. M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, reprint 1997), p. 230.

3. Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable*, Vol. I, *The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, tr. by Michael B. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Rowan Williams, "The Prophetic and the Mystical: Heiler Revisited," *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 64, No. 757 (July/August, 1983), pp. 330-347; F. C. Bauerschmidt, "Walking in the Pilgrim City," in *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 77, No. 909, pp. 504-517; and F. C. Bauerschmidt, "Julian of Norwhich — Incorporated," in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (January 1997), pp. 75-100.

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would ever have been able to commence the search without already knowing at least something of the object of his search). Caputo's example from Augustine, therefore, suggests that one can construe the trace as the trace of God and not the trace of tracing simply inscribed on a void.

In this account, far from being a presence without supplementation, the trace of God ensures also that God is by no means "outside the text" (p. 11). For God's infinite fullness is not to be confused with a finite presence whose objectivity is the convention of an atextual purity. To the contrary, the texts of theology are construed as fragments of one divine text which is an infinite play of signifiers, but without the violence of its Derridean counterpart, without the arbitrary withholding of realization, and without the impersonal indifference of the Derridean trace. For this reason, when Caputo describes the mystical gesture as deliberately "emptying itself of content" (p. 43), he mistakes the plenitude of transcendence for a finite presence, an affirmative end, invulnerable to the thrall of language, or which can somehow be overtaken by human knowledge. He attributes to theology a curious duplicitous gesture of consciously holding back the full force of its language in order to preserve or "respect" (p. 43) the otherness of that end, and to protect God from entry into the process or "wound" of temporal differentiation and finitude inflicted upon Him by the precision of kataphatic theology (p. 44).

As far as the question regarding the religious quality of deconstruction is concerned, it is clear, as Caputo says, that Derrida is not an apophatic thinker insofar as *différance* is not pointing to God but to an infinitely postponed (but wholly immanent) future, to a presence which will never arrive. This might seem, on the surface, to betoken a prophetic religiosity. But Derrida links *différance* to Plato's *khôra*, and does so logically, because *différance* must occur within the space of the "real," even if this space, like Plato's *khôra*, has no actuality outside what it mediates. Yet such a *khôra* for Plato in some sense "is," rather than being what "becomes" (or "differentiates" in Derrida's terms); hence the *khôra* is itself non-negotiably "present" and all Derrida's endless prophetic postponing amounts to is the identically repeated epiphany of this objectivity whose sterility marks it as the most metaphysical, most Western, most scientific of all possible presences.

Thus, after all, Derrida's "prophecy" is linked with an epiphany of presence. Moreover, one that does not mysteriously elude engulfment. Because of the sway of the *khôra*, there is no significant future to prophesy about and the future cannot be anticipated without the mystical engagement with eternity. On the one hand, the future cannot surprise, because it will only offer another banal presence that will need in turn to be deconstructed; on the other, the specific content of the future is simply an indifferent item not at all figured in advance (p. 73). Without eternity, therefore, the line of time is savagely reduced to a linear series of discrete present moments, and Heideggerian ecstatic time (on which Derrida's work is in a sense a gloss) cannot really pertain. The endless postponement, proferred as an advance on theology's supposed dialectic of dissimulating absence and

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affirmative presence, in fact sustains precisely this dialectic, for it is more absolutely a negativity than the traditional *via negativa* which never asserts that one can say nothing at all about the divine (for that would be too positive), but that there is always more to say. Apophaticism never claims to exit the work of kataphasis, of imaging or language. By contrast, it is Derrida's absolute denial of anticipation or proleptic figurae of postponed presences which fastens in place a metaphysical duality of absence and presence.[4]

Just as deconstruction is unable to escape the notion of presence simply by exalting the void, it should be no surprise to find a certain "wordlessness" about *différance*. For *différance* is less in continuity with texts than the God of the mystical tradition, for whom an analogical relation between the signified and signifiers ensures that no signs are ever "mere" signs. On the other hand, the signified cannot be construed other than as the infinite web of mediated signification. In the logic of deconstruction, there is no mediating relation between *différance* and the various appearances of meaning it organizes/disorganizes. In consequence, the universality of the "grammatological flux" is perhaps to be seen as a *saturation* of language which empties language of itself. By allowing meanings "to slip loose, to twist free from their surrounding horizons, to leek and run off" (p. 13), relinquishing commitment to any specific epiphanies of meaning, or preferences for the lure of certain metaphors, Derrida substitutes a universalized, autonomous and impersonal *mathesis* for language as such. For true difference and openness to the Other require an understanding of the fact that some things are more alike than others or are driven by the particularity of a preference which would celebrate that difference and thereby appreciate it better.

These are some of the consequences deconstruction maneuvers. What are the consequences for practical reason? Central to Derrida's understanding of the ethical, and equivalent in a certain sense to the Platonic good, is the gift.[5] It is a puzzle to explain why Derrida is so keen to boast the ethico-political usefulness of deconstruction (pp. 54-6, 112, 129, 142, etc.) when the central element of his notion of the ethical is by definition "impossible" (p. 160f.), except insofar as he concedes the (illusory) "appearance" of gifts and the desire to give as the ethical impulse as such. The problem is that, for Derrida, each possible modal relation to the gift, whether in the form of acknowledgment for, gratitude for, or desire to donate a gift, perforce contaminates its passage with the metaphysical forces of contract and interest. For there to be an uncontaminated gift, there would have to

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4. It is not either presence or absence as such which are metaphysical (in the pejorative sense), but the duality between the two. See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), Chapter 3.

5. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time I. Counterfeit Money*, tr. by Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), p. 161; John Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic," in L. G. Jones and S. E. Fowl, eds., *Rethinking Metaphysics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 119-161 and 131.

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be no giving subject, no receiving subject and no gift (p. 163). But if there is neither benefactor nor recipient, what is left? If even a potential benefactor's intention to give is a precondition for the giving of a gift, then even its *possibility* is coterminous with its impossibility or constitutive negation. The only example of the aporetic gift, for Derrida, is the passage of time — for this alone passes unilaterally, without return and (supposedly) without expectation of return or response of any kind. Yet this is no human gift, and the ethical impulse (to give) remains forever in abeyance.

While one might agree with Derrida that a unilateral, purely disinterested gift is an impossibility, his account of such a gift as the necessary basis for the ethical is by no means beyond dispute. First, Derrida's rejection of the possibility of the gift on the grounds that the moment it is *intended* it is at once cancelled or asphyxiated by the force of intention, simply repeats the assumption that the will (if it exists, which presumably Derrida must doubt) issues from a self-identical subject which has command over all that it wills. Here he enthrones a voluntaristic subjectivity which dominates all that it surveys and intends to survey, even as he insists upon the inevitable abdication of that subjectivity. His fear of the engulfing power of the desire to give, like his assumption that praise of the Other perforce cancels the Other's otherness (p. 36), suggests that there is after all no modality other than that of the indicative, the scientific and the metaphysical — even if this modality is consummated in Derrida's sceptical discourse. If one cannot address the Other — either with one's gifts, praise, or prayer — then, like the surrounding air, the Other is not distant at all, and in refraining from every risk of appropriating the Other through mediation in order to respect its 'non-presence' one has in fact reduced it to hyper-presence. At the same time, the preciosity of Derrida's demur accords the Other a stifling untouchability whose inaccessibility and unmediable enclosure hold the Other at a well-guarded and ineffable remove ("To love is to respect the invisibility of the other, to keep the other *safe*," p. 49).

One must "respect" the Other, say Derrida and Caputo (pp. 12-19, 43, 47 and 52), but to regard "respect" as definitive of the ethical good is to prefer a persistence of the Other outside mutual living communication or celebration.[6] The Other is only revered as worthy of that qualification as an idealized figment, rather than when entering into realized communion. In what sense can this protocol of polite insult, which refuses to acknowledge the Other through any definition, be seen as pertaining to the ethical? Of course, there is no denying that upholding the ethical may on occasion require a sacrifice of the self for an almost unknown Other, in a way which might seem to include (like all acts of giving) a unilateral moment. But one should not exalt such an exhaustive sacrifice as itself definitive of the good since it preserves intact a notion of the social as comprising atomic units devoid of temporal interaction or concelebration. Concomitantly, it

6. John Milbank, "The Midwinter Sacrifice: A Sequel to 'Can Morality be Christian?'," in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1997), pp. 13-38.

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assumes that the only acceptable self is a dead one, since any other self is perforce nullified by a Cartesian subjectivity of self-presence (and indeed, the Cartesian self and the dead self are one and the same).[7] This series of assumptions is wholly arbitrary and excludes the alternative possibility that the actualizing self is not one whose self-possession necessitates a wholesale sacrifice. Indeed, would not such an evacuation deny the Other a future *narrative* of mutuality and delight? Moreover, is it not the case that it is above all when one offers gifts to the Other — who now becomes a *friend* — that self-possession is most superlatively loosened, and that it is at this point that one receives back one's self anew, with difference, or as other from itself? Is it really so sinister to hope for a redeemed and surprising return? More sinister is to give up on the hope for ecstatic communal feasting and fulfilled union as the model of the ethical.[8] This "return" need not be reduced to some mundane token or "reward," as Derrida insists, extrinsically added on at some later stage, but rather should be seen as an ineffable counter-gift indistinguishable from the gesture of offering and its condition of possibility even as a concept — as much or more as the thought of a unilateral arrow without rebound. This alternative reading of the gift would seem to suggest that what actually differentiates the gift from contract is not its unchannelled freedom and resilience against the totalizing of its passage, but the dimension of surprise in time, and the temporal and asymmetrical reciprocity which, even as it eludes a step-by-step chronological description, is nonetheless experienced and celebrated.[9]

If time is the supreme locus for the unilateral gift, this implies that the locus is also death, because time understood, as by Derrida, as a linear arrow, involves absolute loss without return of every passing moment. In other words, its gifts or transitions are a constant passing into unmitigated death. Given that, for Derrida, time's unilateral gift is not possible because time is constituted by subjective and objective presences always involved in a contractual circle, the nearest the subject can get to this impossible passage of gift is self-offering in death for the sake of an Other (any Other), as the superlative example of disappropriation.[10] This manifestation of responsibility for the other assumes that (1) following Heidegger, death is the only thing which is one's own; (2) following Levinas, that as long as one remains a living being, one cannot relate to the other outside the mode of possession; and (3) life and death are mutually opposed.

One can question the ultimacy of these assumptions in several ways. First, is it certain that one's death is the only thing which is one's own? Surely nothing at

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7. Pickstock, *After Writing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-4.

8. Robert Spaemann, *Glück und Wohlwollen: Versuch über Ethik* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989), pp. 9-11, 85-95 and 110-122.

9. Milbank, "The Midwinter Sacrifice," *op. cit.*

10. Derrida, "Donner la Mort" in J.-M. Rabaté and Michael Wetzel, eds., *L'Ethique du Don* (Paris: Metailié-Transition, 1992), pp. 48-9.

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all is one's own, but rather everything, life and death alike, arrive not as possessions but as gifts which as such cannot be owned without ceasing to be themselves, and cannot be received at all without being shared with others in time. To rid oneself of something, whether life, death or anything at all, presumes a prior ownership of the thing. One could therefore read Derrida's denial that hope for a "return" is an ethical category and his substitution of self-abasing sacrificial loss for the enjoyment of shared society in time as a subtle disguise for a covetousness of life-as-presence. Does he here seek to be rid of that which he too much desires?

Secondly, is it really the case that one must evacuate oneself completely in order to realize the ethical good? If the otherness of the Other arrives only through the potential death of the Other, and given that the stability or stasis of death (the void) as conceived by Derrida obtains perfectly to the conditions of the 'object', it would seem that the Other is after all "mastered" or reduced to the condition of an object, just as the Other is in turn bound to transmute his own "I" into an object as always passively available to the demands of a further Other. By thus opening an unending regress which postpones forever the living subject, possession of the Other becomes an unavoidable circumstance. The realm of living beings becomes an array of senseless objects.

Such an understanding of death assumes that life is unambiguously life, and that, for the human subject, death is never "now." To exalt death as the site of the ethical is therefore to preserve the mutual exclusion of life and death, a structure which itself resides at the foundation of Western metaphysics.[11]

The idea of sacrifice and gift without return in Derrida's thought is in fact fully in keeping with his notion of unrealizable prophecy. The good never actually arrives in any form whatsoever. As a consequence, Kierkegaard's account of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is entirely misunderstood by Derrida and Caputo. Abraham's gesture of absolute surrender is only a religious gesture *at all* because of the faith in return, and in the fulfillment of God's prophetic promise that Isaac will have a nation as his descendents. This does indeed seem "impossible," but clearly Kierkegaard (unlike Caputo) links impossibility with faith in return, and not with sacrificial abandonment. Moreover, the faith in return is not entirely irrational (though it is "absurd"), for it is grounded in faith in an eternal source capable of any degree of renewal, even recreation beyond death.

It should be noted that, repeating Derrida, Caputo claims that Abraham's gesture, even though absurd, and therefore apparently escaping the sacrificial economy of capitalistic economy, still falls within such a logic since treasure is here being stored up in heaven by faith. Yet, to the contrary, the "return" to which Abraham looks is of Isaac as a gift in time and not a possession or future absolutized space. (Indeed, Kierkegaard deliberately seeks to surpass the latter position which he describes as "Religiousness A" in favor of "Religiousness B," which is orthodox Christianity). The return enters into time and becomes a fully inhabited

11. Plato, *Phaedo*

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realization. Moreover, Isaac is not to be seen as an "equivalent" measure, as simply one "Isaac" being substituted for another, for Isaac is not substitutable: he is not one other but *all* others, the future of Israel. This qualitative (but no less physical) return truly ruptures the mundane spatial economy of sacrifice. Inversely, it is Derrida's order of sacrifice which remains within the capitalistic order since, as there is no return from the abyss to which things might be "disinterestedly" sacrificed, the abyss is the site of accumulation, remembering that the wealth of capital is purely nominal and has no real content. As regards Derrida's grammar of postponement, one wonders where all these deferred presences are being stored. Does Derrida have a secret hoard? Is he a closet "futures" maverick?

Derrida's account of the gift and death are underpinned by the metaphysical dualities of life and death, presence and absence. Of course, Caputo would protest that Derrida's "radical" discipline of "hauntology" overcomes this metaphysical dichotomy of life and death which, via the schema of the *revenant*, introduces a "middle" undecideability between the real and the unreal, "between full presence and absence between life and death, the fullness of a living present and the void of death" (p. 120). But does the ontological category of the ghost really represent an advance on the dichotomy of life and death? Is it not an immanentized, rationalized, modern and hence *pseudo*-middle? For Derrida, the spectral schema is post-secular and post-Enlightenment (p. 121), for its order presumes a life "haunted by death" and the power of "the non-living to live on." What dichotomy is really outwitted here? A life "haunted by death" is not "life" at all, but a "bad life," like the "bad infinite," foreclosed by the threat of extinction. To haunt life is to render it negatively lived, to cast the shadow of quantitative foreshortening and thus to discourage an alternative way of living, e.g., in the perspective of eternity. Moreover, the continuance in life of the dead is a strange kind of pseudo-transcendence or secularized eternity. It is an irony that Derrida, in struggling to outwit the dichotomy by imposing an artificial third category, ends up by reinforcing its dominion. Perhaps, in order to move genuinely beyond the dichotomy, one must not deny its reality but paradoxically take sides. It is all very well to sing songs about postponement and prophetic tendencies, but maybe the dichotomy of life and death is here to stay, at least until the *eschaton* (which is not postponement in the Derridean sense), in which case, to propose a maneuver beyond the dichotomy is to rush the issue. In the meantime, how should one negotiate it? If one lives in hope of outwitting the dichotomy, without the creation of some rationalized third category and understands that it cannot be circumvented, then one must perhaps articulate a preference — for life. For although Derrida has seemingly willed-away the dichotomy with his realm of revenants, it has not actually gone away, and so his willing returns him to a metaphysical idealism which disguises a perverted covetousness of life. It should also be noted that, by introducing the metaphysics of the ghost as the means by which to exceed the dichotomy of life and death, it is assumed that ordinarily (in the

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quotidian realm of positive spatial presence) nothing ever exceeds its mundane appearance, nothing is ever other than itself. This assumption enthrones all metaphysical dichotomies (life/death, subject/object, active/passive, absence/presence) without remainder.

There is still a question regarding the status of the ghost. For Caputo, it is a religious category because it occupies a "misty realm" (p. 121). This very scholarly definition of the ghost assumes that the secular domain is free from dogma and myth, and, moreover, overlooks the fact that such phantasmagoria are in fact not at all religious. They represent a wholly secular and rationalized parody of theological metaphysics. After all, ghosts are immanent. They never leave history and are the lost souls of those who have *resisted* salvation or the transcendent. One must also question the distinction between a realm of religion and a realm of the everyday. Derrida's use of the specter is also historically naive, for ghosts are in a certain sense a 'modern' invention. The souls and *daimonia* of antiquity were very different; they accompanied life, rather than the disappearance of life being the precondition for their appearance (even if they could persist after the death of the body). But the ghost in Derrida's terms is more like an echo or image, photograph or recording; it is no accident that the heyday of the ghost story was also that of the invention of various visual and aural recording devices. Moreover, in Britain, which has far more ghosts than any other country, they are often to be found in country houses built from the remains of destroyed monasteries, and such ghosts may themselves be monks or nuns. In other words, ghostly haunting is not so much a site of "religion" as the site of the secular being haunted by religion.[12]

The neglect of mutuality and making-present in Derridean ethics is even more crippling for notions of public ethics and political justice than it is for the private sphere. Derrida prefers to keep the Other at an absolute remove — a disdain he calls "respect" (pp. 49 and 52) — and insists that such a liberal relation with the Other is not a relation at all, for it excludes all channels of mediation or participation. By denying engagement with the Other, the Other is imprisoned in its own sphere of pure expectation (it is not accidental that Derrida, as Caputo emphasizes, dislikes the word "community," p. 81). But Derrida insists that this hope for a future justice must be without any basis, either in the form of immanent realization or transcendence, since in either case justice would have to suffer predefinition. However, this familiar Derridean fear of "predefinition" is something of a pathology. If one is hoping for justice, one must concomitantly believe that justice can be realized. Therefore, one must be able to find some analogous link between one's present reality and one's concept of justice. If one were unable to glimpse justice in the contemporary order in any sense at all, one would not know anything (as Hegel realized) of justice whatsoever. (One would indeed

12. Julia Briggs, *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (London: Faber, 1977); Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert, *English Ghost Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. xii-xvii

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desire emptily). To desire justice is therefore to know something of its shape. Furthermore, if justice means, as for Derrida, that one must enable differences or singularities to flourish, this requires that such differences must be able to harmonize with one another, if violent conflict is to be avoided. Indeed, Derrida's apparent resolution of this difficulty via the protocol of liberal "respect" or tolerance is reducible to violence because it requires the confinement of people within limits, which can only result in a cacophany of arguments about the exact bounds of such necessarily approximate and conventional limits — arguments whose only arbiter would be the decrees of the market or formal bureaucratic power made necessarily without respect to justice.

If singularities are to flourish, there must be a blending or harmonizing of differences — a real harmony and not a *mathesis* of enforced pacification. Thus hoping for justice would mean hoping for the real harmony of things to arrive, according to an order which is more than merely an accidental arrangement. If it seems that there is no harmony at the moment, then, according to such a reading, one need not assume that such harmony is forever lost or deferred, because it is guaranteed by an original source. And one can defend the ontological possibility of this transcendent source by suggesting that, if there were no harmony of difference in the world, then it would be a contradiction in terms to hope for justice. One would simply have to assume that injustice has ontological roots in reality and talk of some messianic expectation of justice such as Derrida's would be out of the question. In a sense, it would be preferable to have plain unlarded liberalism than all this hollow excitement.

The question of the implications of deconstruction for public polity leads back to the issue of religion which lies at the heart of Caputo's thesis. For Caputo, what Derrida finally provides is a new pure religiosity, purged of the political dangers of dogmatic institutional religion. However, regardless of the perhaps inponderable question of whether or not Derrida's project is to be seen as religious, Caputo's presuppositions about religion are thoroughly outdated and askew. First of all, his definition of "religion" ignores recent historiographical work on the dubious origins of the category of "religion" and he thus falls prey to his own snare. Deconstruction, he writes, is a religious phenomenon because it is "a prayer for the impossible"; "[b]y religion I mean a pact with the impossible, a covenant with the unrepresentable, a promise made by the *tout autre* with its people, where we are all the people of the *tout autre*, the people of the promise, promised over to the promise" (p. xx). This "pact" is then variously described as a "solicitation," a "deal cut between the *tout autre* and its faithless . . . followers"; "Jacques Derrida," writes Caputo, "has religion, a certain religion, his religion, and he speaks of God all the time" (p. xviii). Now, this religion peculiar to Derrida, oddly described by Caputo in metaphors of secular contractualism and market interest, is exalted as free from the dogmas and propositional positivism of the determined religions and the authoritarian structures of religious hierarchies

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which, it is sweepingly claimed, have been responsible for the rise of political absolutism and "holy wars" throughout the ages (p. 47). Yet there is evidence to suggest that, to the contrary, the early modern wars of religion, far from causing the need for the rise of the state as guarantor of social peace and justice, were themselves precipitated by pressures exerted by the rise of the secular state. Moreover, the ethico-political probity of a private religion, "a certain religion, his religion" (p. 47), is highly questionable. It has been argued recently that religion (as a distinct phenomenon and a private matter) is a secular modern concept introduced in the early modern period to sustain the rise of absolutism and the nation-state. It is no accident that Aquinas seldom uses the word "*religio*" because, for him, it was not isolatable as a set of rationalized conscious maneuvers. Rather, it was a habit, a whole way of life which saw no opposition between the public and the private. But by the late 15th century, the concept of religion as a universal pulsion variously manifested in disparate but equally valid or invalid practices became a useful means of separating the realms of public and private, body and soul.[13] It follows that to argue, as Derrida does, that apparently non-dogmatic, private religion is the only means by which to occlude tendencies to absolutism is absurd. As Talal Asad has shown, religion seen as a universal essence and a private pulsion detachable from a specific locus in public practices, becomes compatible with *any practices whatsoever*.[14] It is precisely purified non-dogmatic religion (of the self, for the self) that most colludes with the totalitarian.

What neither Derrida nor his followers seem to comprehend is that a loosening of the bonds of public liturgical operations in favor of a wholly subjective eruption of unchannelled flows and desires (whether actualized or perpetually postponed) is the corollate not of freedom from tyranny but the imposition of arbitrary rules or codes of tolerance, a mathematics of mutual respect and ethical protocol which disguises the substantive oppressions of the capitalist order. Derrida himself repeatedly calls for "respect" of the other as the basic principle of his ethico-politics. But all such indifferent respect can afford is an *apparent* social peace, for it entails that one disguise one's preferences, and so merely "represent" a civil indifference or tolerance. Such a rational ethico-politics encourages not liberation from arbitrary regimes but a reactive compliance with political authority and, because the private is here ruptured from the public, one finds that one's ability to question the arbitrariness of this authority has been relinquished.

Finally, Caputo openly admits that his proposal for a non-dogmatic religion amounts to a religion within the bounds of reason alone (p. 151f), albeit deconstructed reason. But this of course means a religion of philosophers, so if Caputo's

13. W. T. Cavanaugh, "A Fire Strong Enough to Consume the House: The Wars of Religion and the Rise of the State," in *Modern Theology*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 1995), pp. 397-420.

14. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 27-54.

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religion, unlike the positive religions, is supposed to bring perpetual peace, this is tantamount to saying that philosophy, unlike religion, is unwarlike. But a short reflection will reveal just how banal such a position really is. First, if religion means anything at all, it surely means those assumptions of a society which are so fundamental that they inform all its thought and action. Obviously, such things will sometimes be fought over. They always have been and always will be. To complain about this would be like saying we must ignore what is important, even what is essential to human life, because it is dangerous. Certain dangers are clearly inescapable and the danger of religion most of all falls into this category. Second, since the world religions have successfully subsumed within themselves all sorts of squabbling local cultures, it is clearly the case that if, e.g., Islam has engendered war, it has engendered as much or more peace. Third, and most crucially, it may be true that philosophy is peaceful compared with dogmatic religion, but *only* to the extent that philosophy remains the concern of a privileged few, e.g., those clomping around the enclosed spaces of university campuses. So to recommend a philosophical faith as the answer is to recommend something that will only be safe from violent contention so long as it does not embody itself in peoples' everyday rituals and practices, and because deconstruction is merely a formalistic protocol for postponement, it cannot be so embodied. Therefore, any such claim that philosophy has no blood on its hands is a singularly smug and empty boast. One need not bow down before such terminal priggishness.

Catherine Pickstock

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Intellectual Responsibility: The Specter of Benda and the Phantom of Bakunin

Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, tr. by David Wills (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), viii + 115 pp.

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, tr. by Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), xx + 198 pp.

In view of less than average performances, the responsibility of intellectuals has been debated for the better part of the century. Heidegger, Lukács, Gentile, Merleau-Ponty (indeed the whole post-WWII French intellectual milieu), De Man, etc. have acquired notoriety.[1] The political crimes of the century, along with the increased voluntary and involuntary dependence of intellectuals on the state, led to the creation, perhaps even the domination, of a new breed of intellecto-criminals, who do whatever it takes, collaborate as much as necessary, to obtain state favors. Perhaps the best portrayal of the intellecto-criminal is in Malcolm Bradbury's novel *Doctor Criminale*, in which the search for the great post-*glasnost* intellectual ends at the Swiss banks where he deposited stolen state funds for his communist masters.[2]

This historical background is the context in which the old skeptic position that takes "justice" to be the victors' use of their power to punish the vanquished according to their own values, without a culturally independent moral grounding, gained popularity. The deconstruction of the person was just as useful: the accused are manifestations, moments of their era, history, nation, race, discourse community, etc. and therefore cannot be held personally responsible for their actions. Actually, no individuals can be said to have participated in any crime, only anonymous masses, abstract entities. Besides, the accusers cannot be judged any better than the accused according to their own values: Did not the Americans

1. Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: A Political Life*, tr. by Allan Blunden, (London: Fontana Press, 1994), pp. 165-168 and 205; Richard Wolin, *The Terms of Cultural Criticism: The Frankfurt School, Existentialism, Poststructuralism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); *Idem.*, *Labyrinths: Explorations in the Critical History of Ideas* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 123-239. Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944-1956* (Berkeley CA: California University Press, 1994).

2. Malcolm Bradbury, *Doctor Criminale* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1992). Though this is a novel painfully close to Central European academic and intellectual realities, the story satirizes the Viennese, Hungarian and Italian intellectual world. The character of Bazlo Criminale is a combination of Lukács and De Man.

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commit genocide against the Indians? And what about slavery and racism in the South? The only moral rule in history is: might makes right.

Similar claims have been made by virtually all the criminals of the 20th century and their collaborators. 20th century political criminals have been the fantasies of defence lawyers: They never confess to anything. In previous centuries, on occasion, political sinners were filled with remorse, confessed and retired to a monastery. But remorse seems to have disappeared from 20th century political discourse along with words like "atonement," "amends," "penance," etc. Only the materialistic "recompense" or the legalistic "redress" are now left. Responsibility itself has become a politically contentious concept.

Previously, determinism and social holism (the metaphysical doctrine that social units precede the individual and therefore individuals are not responsible for their actions *qua* members of a class) were the main metaphysical doctrines used by political scoundrels to avoid responsibility. But compatibilist doctrines allow determinism and responsibility to co-exist, and determinism is hardly in philosophical vogue. Similarly, social holism is hardly a dominant doctrine. These days, irresponsibility appears to seek its legitimation in the denial of the person — the subject of responsibility — as a metaphysical construct. It is no accident that many post-communist intellectuals adopted versions of late Heideggerianism and related philosophies. It becomes a matter of Being replacing the means of production as the foundation of totality. More importantly, it seems to provide a new foundation for irresponsibility, especially for a group of people who have very good reasons to look for an ideology that excuses their collaboration.

The record of 20th century intellectuals led to questioning the traditional Platonic concept of intellectual responsibility that regards philosophers as having special knowledge of socially useful truth, assuming that doing good requires knowledge of the truth. The fragmentation of knowledge and the obsolescence of the concept of absolute knowledge require those who believe in intellectual responsibility to reformulate its meaning.[3]

In recent writings, Derrida has turned increasingly to social and political themes, including responsibility. The deconstruction of the person poses at least a *prima facie* challenge to responsibility. Derrida attempts to rise to the challenge. In his search for responsibility, he turned to the philosophy of Jan Patocka,[4] the Czech phenomenologist and co-founder with Vaclav Havel of Charter 77. Patocka is a natural point of reference in a search for philosophical responsibility because he successfully integrated philosophy and practice, assuming moral

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3. Tom Rockmore, "Philosophy, Literature, and Intellectual Responsibility," in *American Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1993), pp. 109-121.

4. Erazim Kohak: *Jan Patocka: Philosophy and Selected Writings* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989). Aviezer Tucker, "Patocka vs. Heidegger: The Humanistic Difference" in *Telos* 92 (Summer 1992), pp. 85-98; and "Sacrifice: From Isaac to Patocka" in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), pp. 117-124.

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responsibility and accepting a Socratic fate in a struggle for human rights.

Derrida interprets parts of Patocka's fifth and sixth heretical essays in the philosophy of history.[5] However, there is a gap between Derrida's interpretation and Patocka's text: Patocka was concerned with understanding the apparent self-destruction of Europe in wars and revolutions. The theme is similar to Husserl's *Crisis of the European Sciences* — only from a Czech perspective, and after forty more years of wars, revolution, invasions, oppression, and desperation. Patocka drew a distinction between the "everyday" and the "exceptional," the realm of passion and the demonic. Following Heidegger and others, he perceived the realm of the everyday as alienating and inauthentic: work was self-enslavement necessary for survival. The other side of everydayness is escapism, a stepping out of the self, the orgiastic *ek-stasis*, loss of responsibility.[6] Patocka interpreted the history of Europe as the interplay between technological everydayness and orgiastic irresponsibility, the wars and revolutions of modernity. This interpretation of European history can and should be challenged: boredom is not exactly a reason for war; on the contrary, loss in everydayness often seems to prevent transcendental wars.[7]

Patocka interpreted religion as the realm where the orgiastic element of the sacred is overcome by regulation and the imposition of responsibility. He conceives ontology as the basis of responsibility, a clear relation with Being. Heideggerian confrontation with finitude leads to individuation of the soul, the subject of responsibility. Religious confrontation with finitude in the form of belief in the preservation of the soul thus also leads to personal responsibility. Patocka sees history as the process of overcoming the dialectics of inauthentic everydayness versus equally inauthentic orgiastic escape in an authentic discovery of the self and inquiry into its nature, care for the soul. History began in the Greek *polis* with the rise of philosophy and the discovery of Being. Patocka perceives Plato's metaphysics in this light, as turning the soul away from the orgiastic toward discipline, responsibility and the transcendent ideas. In this respect, for Patocka, as for Nietzsche, Christianity was Platonism for the people. It achieved personal responsibility and the suppression of the orgiastic *via* a relation to a personal God, the salvation of the soul and fear of damnation for sin.

Patocka's crisis of modernity was the destruction of the Christian-Platonic ontology of responsibility that had overcome the everydayness/orgiastic dialectics

5. Jan Patocka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, tr. by Erazim Kohak (Peru IL: Open Court, 1996), pp. 95-118.

6. Patocka divided human existence into three movements, only the third of which, care for the soul, is exclusively human. For Patocka, labor is part of the second movement of defence and self-extension; it is forced on man for survival and is not properly authentic. On Patocka's three movements, see Aviezer Tucker, "Jan Patocka's Idea of the World Movement as Ultimate," in *Ultimate Reality and Meaning* 20 (1997), pp. 107-122.

7. See my review of the French translation of the *Heretical Essays* in *History and Theory* 31 (1992), pp. 355-363.

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with the advancement of modern scientific rationality, the objectification of nature, its emptying of values and meaning, etc. He thought he had discovered sacrifice as a mean to transcend everydayness without resorting to orgiastic escape. He sought to found "communities of the shattered," dissidents who sacrificed everydayness and assumed responsibility through confrontation with death — a confrontation he did not survive.

In *The Gift of Death*, Derrida concentrates on the religious origin of responsibility. He adds that, in response to the responsibility of man, God gives a gift of death, an expression that does not appear in Patocka: "a history of secrecy as history of responsibility is tied to a culture of death, in other words to the different figures of the gift of death or of putting to death" (p. 10). Derrida correctly infers from Patocka that responsibility has a history. Yet this does not warrant his relativist conclusion because this history is consistent with Patocka's position that responsibility is a universal and essential human potentiality actualized under certain historical conditions. Derrida emphasizes Patocka's contention that Platonism incorporated the orgiastic mystery, while Christianity suppressed it, thereby creating a secret, whose death is mourned. The repressed secrecy returns occasionally in orgiastic eruptions.

Derrida quotes Patocka to the effect that Christianity has an inadequate thematization of responsibility. In Derrida's interpretation, ignorance as to what constitutes responsibility is somehow "irresponsible." Then all responsibility involves irresponsibility because: ". . . some part of irresponsibility insinuates itself wherever one demands responsibility without sufficiently conceptualizing and thematizing what 'responsibility' means; that is to say everywhere. . . . the activating of responsibility (decision, act, praxis) will always take place before and beyond any theoretical or thematic determination. It will have to decide without it, independently from knowledge; that will be the condition of a practical idea of freedom. We should therefore conclude that not only is the thematization of the concept of responsibility always inadequate but that it is always so because it must be so. . ." (pp. 25-26).

Derrida reduces responsibility to its opposite — decisionism — the decisionism so closely associated with the political events Patocka characterized as orgiastic and irresponsible. Derrida's basic intended mistake is the identification of responsibility with its opposite: "a decision that exceeds simple conscience or simple theoretical understanding." Then he plays on the contradictions that this perverted sense of "responsibility" creates in contrast with its ordinary language use. Eventually, Derrida comes down squarely on the side of the orgiastic when he asserts that Platonic politics forbidding the secret orgiastic (Patocka's kind of politics) are totalitarian.

Derrida interprets correctly Patocka's position that responsibility and philosophy are born of the freedom, facing finitude, to be a unique self, an irreducible irreplaceable singularity. But then, through a misinterpretation of Levinas' critique

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of Heidegger's discussion of death (Levinas' emphasis on responsibility to the other), Derrida goes to the opposite — to sacrifice as responsibility as giving the gift of death to other people. Instead of the self-sacrifice of Socrates, Jesus and Patocka, Derrida's model for "responsible" sacrifice is Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in *Fear and Trembling*: "I must sacrifice what I love. I must come to hate what I love, in the same moment, at the instant of granting death. I must hate and betray my own, that is to say offer them the gift of death by means of the sacrifice . . . insofar as I love them. I must hate them insofar as I love them. . . . It must hate and betray what is most lovable. Hate cannot be hate, it can only be the sacrifice of love to love. It is not a matter of hating, betraying by one's breach of trust, or offering the gift of death to what one doesn't love" (p. 64).

Derrida's style captures the emotional confusion of love and hate, the desire for irresponsibility and the transcendental legitimation that takes over, as a parent loves a child to death. Derrida articulates a post-modern ideology of sacrificial killing of kids, motivated by a secret absolute responsibility to the blood-thirsty transcendental realm: ". . . a secret, hidden, separate, absent, or mysterious God, the one who decides, without revealing his reasons, to demand of Abraham that most cruel, impossible, and untenable gesture: to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. All that goes on in secret. God keeps silent about his reasons. Abraham does also, and the book [*Fear and Trembling*-A. T.] is not signed by Kierkegaard, but by Johannes de Silentio. . . . This pseudonym . . . reminds us that a mediation linking the question of secrecy to that of responsibility immediately raises the question of the name and of the signature. . ." (p. 58).

Derrida differentiates what he terms absolute responsibility (corresponding to irresponsibility) from general responsibility (corresponding to responsibility in its ordinary sense): "Absolute responsibility is not a responsibility, at least it is not general responsibility or responsibility in general. It needs to be exceptional or extraordinary, and it needs to be that absolutely and par excellence: it is as if absolute responsibility could not be derived from a concept of responsibility and therefore, in order for it to be what it must be it must remain inconceivable, indeed unthinkable: it must therefore be irresponsible in order to be absolutely responsible" (pp. 60-1). Derrida's verbiage performs quite a dialectical feat: the ultimate irresponsibility of sacrificing one's children turns into absolute responsibility; ethical responsibility becomes irresponsibility. Here absolute responsibility is to the transcendental realm, which as usual in the Western metaphysical tradition to which Derrida belongs is used to legitimize paedocide (see the stories of Iphigenia and Oedipus).[8] Derrida is aware of the political implications of his

8. See Aviezer Tucker, "Paedocide and Civilization," forthcoming in *Skepsis*. Matustik becomes entangled in this same set of problems. See Aviezer Tucker, "Identity Crisis," review of Martin Matustik, *Postnational Identity: Critical Theory and Existential Philosophy in Habermas, Kierkegaard, and Havel* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994), pp. 287-293.

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position. He writes of the endless wars and sacrifices over the site of the Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, mount Moriah (traditionally identified with Temple Mount in Jerusalem) among the three monotheistic religions: "The reading, interpretation, and tradition of the sacrifice of Isaac are themselves sites of bloody, holocaustic sacrifice. . . . There is no front between responsibility and irresponsibility but only between different appropriations of the same sacrifice, different orders of responsibility . . ." (p. 70).

Derrida cannot say the obvious, that a good God would never give anybody a license to kill, that a prophet of murder is a false prophet. His discourse of sacrificial murder offers equal legitimation for conflicting individual and communal forms of sacrificial murder. It is unclear whether the series of suicide-bombings had already begun in Israel when Derrida was writing, but he legitimates them, as he defends as absolutely responsible and morally irreproachable the killing of children in the name of a secret God, be he Jewish, Palestinian or deranged (it is increasingly difficult to differentiate among them in today's Middle East). For Derrida, each terrorist, each "engineer" who wires a Palestinian child to blow himself up, each fundamentalist Rabbi who sends his misguided followers to kill would represent different and equal absolute responsibilities. Derrida criticizes the likely response of contemporary French society to a father who would sacrifice his son on the top of Montmartre and consequently be prosecuted and subjected to all kinds of legal, psychiatric and terror "experts." Derrida claims that "society" has no right to morally condemn such a sacrifice, considering all the terrible things that happen in the world facing Western indifference (85-7). Of course, much can and should be criticized about the conduct of Western states. But this criticism has to be from a moral perspective. This is exactly the responsibility of Western intellectuals: to criticize atrocities on all sides and hold their perpetrators responsible, be they Nazis, communists, terrorists, etc. Let the chips fall where they may.

Derrida subverts Levinas: "If every human is wholly other, if everyone else, or every other one, is every bit other, then one can no longer distinguish between a claimed generality of ethics that would need to be sacrificed in sacrifice, and the faith that turns towards God alone, as wholly other, turning away from human duty" (p. 84). The difference between ethics and religion collapses, as does any general ethics and concept of responsibility, as Derrida puts it in what appears as a childish parody on philosophy: "This applies all the more to political or legal matters. The concept of responsibility, like that of decision, would thus be found to lack coherence or consequence, even lacking identity with respect to itself, paralyzed by what can be called an aporia or an antinomy" (p. 85). What utter nonsense! Derrida finds the essence of responsibility not in the abyss of rational discourse but in an unreturned gaze of unseen supreme God who can see into the places where the self cannot see itself. And that God demands sacrifice! In the first half of the 20th century, the greatest danger to democracy came from those

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who held that "God is dead and therefore everything is permitted" as long as it is performed in the name of supra-personal forces such as nation, race and class. Today, the greatest danger seems to come from those who hold that "God is alive and demands blood and therefore everything is permitted." Derrida offers them a legitimating ideology: "Irresponsibility is Responsibility."

"Post-modernism" has probably the greatest share of adherents among "post-communist intellectuals." Partially, this is a matter of the name: people who have read hardly any books published in the West for 50 years are hopelessly incompetent and yet desperately wish to be intellectually "in." Since they have not the slightest idea of what is "in" or "out," they pick on a label that sounds contemporary. What "post-modernism" means for them is a new ideology to help them keep their positions. Since they are too stupid or too lazy to become acquainted with contemporary literature (not always available in depleted East European libraries), they learn a few slogans, read a book or two and feel updated. Most significantly, the few slogans they know — all values are relative, there is no person and no personal responsibility, deconstruction of metaphysics, logocentrism is out, absurdity is in — fit their personal needs. People who betrayed their communities and collaborated need an ideology that does not admit of personal responsibility so they cannot be held responsible for what they have done. They need an ideology without values, so there are no criteria for judging them. Whether or not they actually believed in Marxism-Leninism, it is the only system they know. Its collapse left them feeling that philosophy came to an end. What remains of their Marxism — the politicization of philosophy, the historicism of values, the holism that sees the person only as a member of a class — can be easily integrated with the post-modernism Derrida developed after abandoning Maoism, that Lyotard wrote about after relinquishing the editorship of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, and that Rorty wrote about after outgrowing his Trotskyism.

After 1989, Derrida returned with some nostalgia to examining his Marxist tradition. He wanted to reappropriate the Marxian inheritance for the interpretation of the contemporary world. The new *fin-de-siècle* apocalyptic endism (of history, philosophy, etc.) reminded him of his younger Marxist days, which along with the revelations about communism in the 1950s led to the development of deconstruction. Derrida warns against a return to Marx without Marxism, as just another philosophy without the injunction to change the world while interpreting revolt and revolution. Yet he defends the heterogeneity of voices and untranslatable languages of Marx the revolutionary, theoretician, terrorist and scientist. He sees his own reappropriation of the spirit of Marx to be a radical self-criticism, continuing the tradition of the Enlightenment: "if there is a spirit of Marxism which I will never be ready to renounce, it is not only the critical idea or the questioning stance. . . . It is even more a certain emancipatory and messianic affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try

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to liberate from any dogmatics and even from any metaphysico-religious determination, from any messianism" (p. 89).

Derrida plays on Marx' metaphor for communism in *The Communist Manifesto*, comparing this specter to that of Hamlet senior coming from the dead to exhort the living for justice. Derrida treats Marx much like the later Heidegger treated the Gods: the old Gods fled the earth and the new Gods have not arrived yet. This is a post-*Götterdämerung*, post-1989 era. He prepares expectations for the return of Marx and his Valhalla of apparatchiki. Derrida perceives triumphant post-1989 liberalism and capitalism as the old/new hegemony; but every hegemony has a haunting. He still perceives European history as an organized fight against the ghost of Marxism. In agreement with the extreme Right and Left, he interprets fascism and Stalinism as reactions to each other, thus justifying each other. The specter of communism has no embodiment at present: it is a specter of the future. The new liberal hegemony seeks to exorcise the Marxism to come, keep it in its grave, along with the revolution. He is the champion of the revolution to come, challenging the "dominant discourse." What is dominant is rather relative: in comparative literature departments, Derrida's discourse is dominant and the specter of Julien Benda has to do the haunting. But in the context of the San Fernando Valley where California taxpayers paid Derrida to give his lecture on Marx at UC Riverside, he may have felt threatened by the discourse of his ultimate sponsors. Yet, despite the apparent generosity of California tax-payers, Derrida has some conspiracy theory about the media manipulating the population against Marx. He forgets that the greatest attempts to manipulate populations by the media were for Marx, and they failed miserably.

Derrida criticizes the eschatological-messianic aspect of Fukuyama's teleological scheme of history that promises liberalism as the end of history — an eschatology Fukuyama shares with Marx and messianic religions. Derrida enumerates the reasons he regards the democratic-liberal eschatological endism as premature. Yet an eschatological liberal like Fukuyama would not find most of Derrida's challenges problematic. Fukuyama never said that the world is perfect or going to be perfect any time soon. He merely claimed that liberalism is the last ideology. Free market liberalism has solutions to most of these problems, if it can only overcome the resistance of states to a world where people, labor, commodities and ideas can flow freely. The adverse effects of such free movements (as in arms trafficking, the spread of nuclear weapons, and possibly drug dealing) would require the kind of universalist ethics Derrida abhors. Consequently, he does not pose any serious challenges to it.

Derrida's positive politics are of an informal "new international" able to implement international law and handle global socio-economic forces such as international capital in an anti-statist manner. He welcomes the withering away of party-state relations and prepares expectations for a new, more informal and friendly party. His longing for the hegemony of a new international is reminiscent

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of Bakunin. Long before any Marxist tasted the temptation of power, Bakunin predicted quite accurately what would follow a successful Marxist regime.[9] Since the behavior of some of Derrida's self-professed American followers has sometimes been less than tolerant of alternative opinions, and sometimes less than completely respectful of freedom of speech, a comparison with the Bakunin-Marx dialogue is useful. Bakunin asked: ". . . if the proletariat is ruling, over whom will it rule? This means that there will remain another proletariat which will be subordinated to this new domination, this new state." Marx answered: ". . . with the coming of the proletariat to power, its enemies will not yet have disappeared . . . it [the proletariat] must use measures of force, hence governmental measures." Of course, the class enemies never disappeared, so continuous use of force was necessary until 1989. What is to stop Derrida's new international from continuously enforcing its anti-hegemonic hegemony (which could quickly corrupt to an ideology of a terrorist elite that would continuously construct new rival discourse hegemonies to justify their own hegemony)? In Western democracies, human rights should limit the force of any authority. But Derrida refuses to accept the universal validity of human rights.

Bakunin asked: "Can it really be that the entire proletariat will stand at the head of the administration?" Marx answered in the affirmative: communism means self-government. Bakunin was right: self-government is impossible beyond a certain organizational size. How will the members of Derrida's new international govern themselves without democratic formalities and institutes any better than the Marxists did? Bakunin was at his prophetic best when he predicted that: ". . . the so-called people's state will be nothing other than the quite despotic administration of the masses of the people by a new very non-numerous aristocracy of real and supposed learned ones. The people is not learned, so it will be entirely freed from the cares of governing, . . . a fine liberation! The Marxists. . . realizing that the regime of the learned . . . will in fact be a dictatorship in spite of all the democratic forms, console themselves with the thought that the dictatorship will be temporary and short-lived." And Marx answered most appropriately: "Non, mon cher! The class domination of the workers over the resisting strata of the old world must last until the economic foundation of the existence of classes are destroyed."

Can Derrida provide a better answer? Deconstruction is haunted by yet another ghost, that of Benda, the prophet of the betrayal of the intellectuals, their refusal to accept responsibility.[10] Like Patocka, Benda wished to understand the slaughterhouse of WWI, the first popular war motivated by national, racial and class hatreds, deified homogeneous mass political passions. Before modernity, intellectuals were dispassionate, loyal to abstract principles rather than to the passions of the masses.

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9. Bakunin and Marx, "After the Revolution: Marx Debates Bakunin," in Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 542- 548.

10. Julien Benda, *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals*, tr. by Richard Aldington (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

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Thanks to intellectuals, humanity did evil but honored the good. In the 19th century, intellectuals started playing the game of political passions. Benda perceived the role of intellectuals in opposing the lay passions of class, race, and nation: "When Gerson entered the pulpit of Notre Dame to denounce the murderers of Louis d'Orleans; when Spinoza, at the peril of his life, went and wrote the words '*ultimi barbarorum*' on the gate of those who had murdered the de Witts; when Voltaire fought for the Calas family; when Zola and Duclaux came forward to take part in a celebrated lawsuit (Dreyfus affair); all these 'clerks' were carrying out their functions as 'clerks' in the fullest and noblest manner. They were the officiants of abstract justice and were sullied with no passion for a worldly object. Moreover, there exists a certain criterion by which we may know whether the 'clerk' who takes public action does so in conformity with his true functions; and that is, that he is immediately reviled by the laymen, whose interests he thwarts (Socrates, Jesus). We may say that beforehand that the 'clerk' who is praised by the layman is a traitor to his office."[11]

Before Derrida was born, Benda had perceived the danger to the traditional moral role of intellectuals from: ". . . these new 'clerks' [who] declare that they do not know what is meant by justice, truth, and other 'metaphysical fogs,' that for them the true is determined by the useful, the just by circumstances."[12] Once the clerks denied universal truth and morality, they became "pragmatic" they discovered local truth and morality in the service of national states, finding favor with the state: ". . . up till our own times men had only received two sorts of teaching in what concerns the relations between politics and morality. One was Plato's, and it said: 'Morality decides politics'; the other was Machiavelli's, and it said: 'Politics have nothing to do with morality.' To-day they receive a third. M. Maurras teaches: 'Politics decides morality.' However, the real departure is not that this doctrine should be put before them, but that they should adopt it."[13] In Benda's opinion, his contemporary French writers became involved in politics for career reasons. The intellectual has become increasingly a part of the bourgeoisie. The Bohemian men of letters have practically disappeared, at least from the public sphere. Toward 1890 men of letters lost their intellectual sensibility. "This is the epoch when they [the intellectuals] were heard to assert that a book is great as soon as it achieves a literary and artistic success, that its intellectual content is of no interest, that all arguments are equally defensible, that error is no more false than truth, etc."[14]

In Benda's opinion, modern intellectuals became political "realists" to escape moral disarray after the collapse of the great philosophical systems and their contradictory absolutes. The collapse followed the disappointment with the prophets of 1848 and what became of their ideals of humanity. This realistic cynicism is the

11. *Ibid*, pp. 36-37.
12. *Ibid*, p. 42.
13. *Ibid*, pp. 86-87.
14. *Ibid*, pp. 137-138.

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result of lack of intellectual discipline, the inability to devote oneself to reason, above the philosophical schools. Whether the disappointment is with the ideals of 1848 or of 1968, if the result is absolute relativist cynicism to all truths and all moralities, what is left is greed. The intellectual writes no more what he thinks is right or likely to be true, but what sells to those who can pay, most notably the state.

Following Marx, Derrida describes the commodification of intellectuals; they become ghosts who cannot recognize themselves in the mirror: ". . . you who are prostitution itself, you who give yourselves to gold, you who give yourselves for gold, you who are destined to general indifference, you who confuse in equivalency the proper and the improper, credit and discredit, faith and lie, the 'true and the false,' oath, perjury, and abjuration, and so forth. You the whores of money, you would go so far as to abjure ('foreswear') your trade or your vocation (of perjured whore) for money. Like a madam who would give up even her whores for money" (p. 44).

Aviezer Tucker

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